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# Erfurt School of Public Policy

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## Careers with the World Bank

**A study on recruitment strategies and  
qualification requirements at the World Bank**

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### **Professional Education for International Organizations**

A research project of the Erfurt School of Public Policy funded by the  
German Federal Ministry for Education and Research

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**Contents**

Executive Summary (English) .....	3
List of Tables and Figures .....	4
1 Introduction .....	5
2 The World Bank Group .....	7
2.1 Objectives, Activities and Functional Structure .....	7
2.2 Personnel Structures .....	12
2.3 Recruitment and Promotion Procedures .....	17
3 Research Design .....	20
4 Results .....	21
4.1 Motivation For a Career at the World Bank .....	22
4.2 Educational Background – An assessment .....	24
4.2.1 Education and Skills .....	24
4.2.2 Fields of Study .....	27
4.2.3 Levels of Education and Educational Traditions .....	30
4.3 Professional Experience Prior to Joining the World Bank .....	34
4.4 Necessary Skills and Qualifications for a World Bank Career .....	37
4.5 Recruitment Procedures .....	41
4.6 Germans at the World Bank .....	45
4.7 Recommendations to Future Applicants .....	52
4.2.1 Education .....	52
4.2.2 Work Experience .....	53
4.2.3 Application and Interview .....	54
4.8 Recommendations for Curriculum Development .....	55
5 Conclusion .....	60
References .....	62

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## Executive Summary

This report presents findings that were obtained in the PROFIO study on recruitment strategies and qualification requirements at the World Bank. As our method of analysis, we conduct and assess qualitative interviews with World Bank employees, primarily of the higher level staff category. We find that job preparedness derives from a combination of the educational background, professional work experience, and behavioral skills. With respect to the educational background, we find that the most frequent fields of study among our interviewees are Economics and development-related fields. Hence, we conclude that the study of such fields, and the integration of multi-disciplinary elements serve as a good educational preparation for a career at the World Bank. In addition, this study unveils differences among respondents when asked to evaluate their university education. We find that the Anglo-Saxon education tradition trumps other education systems in terms of usefulness; especially when compared to the German system of higher education. Through a sub-sample analysis of German respondents only, we are able to extrapolate specific weaknesses that render German higher education ill-suited to prepare its students for a career with the World Bank. Furthermore, this study offers specific recommendations with respect to curriculum design. To ensure students' preparedness for employment with the World Bank, the interviewees advocated an international outlook of the educational institution as an essential prerequisite for students' ability to perform in international settings – an international student body and English as the main language of instruction were frequently said to serve as means to acquire an international outlook early. Furthermore, respondents stressed the importance of knowledge application during one's education. Hence, curricula should include problem-solving exercises and integrate internship opportunities.

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**List of Tables and Figures**

Table 1: World Bank Group Staff Categories .....	13
Table 2: Major Donor Countries and Staff Representation, 2005 .....	14
Table 3: Sample Statistics of World Bank Interviewees.....	21
Table 4: Respondents' Major and Minor Fields of Study .....	28
Table 5: Respondents' Work Experiences Across Sectors .....	34
Figure 1: World Bank Group Institutions .....	7
Figure 2: World Bank Lending by Theme, 2005 .....	10
Figure 3: World Bank Organization Chart, 2006.....	11
Figure 4: German Staff Representation Across Grade Levels, 2005 .....	15
Figure 5: Entry Level Opportunities for Recent Graduates.....	17
Figure 6: Standard Recruitment Phases for Higher Level Positions .....	19
Figure 7: Qualifications and Competencies - Integrator Profile.....	38

## 1 Introduction

Since July 2004, the Erfurt School of Public Policy has been carrying out a research project, which aims at developing educational curricula designed to prepare students for careers at international organizations. The project is called “Professional Education for International Organizations”, or PROFIO for short. Its core research question analyzes (1) necessary skills and qualifications for careers at international organizations and, directly related, (2) the ability of educational programs to facilitate the acquisition of such skills.

In light of Germany’s continued commitment to international cooperation across a variety of foreign policy areas, we conjecture that an effective foreign policy agenda would foster such a commitment across several dimensions. These include, inter alia, monetary contributions to support the work of international organizations as well as representation of its personnel at international organizations to support their work and, ultimately, help shape their output.<sup>1</sup> On the budgetary side, Germany’s contributions are consistently high across the major multilateral organizations to which Germany is a member. With respect to its level of staff representation, however, Germany has almost equally consistently exhibited relatively low levels of representation. If we take budgetary contribution as a measure for representation, Germany tends to be underrepresented. While PROFIO does not assess the linkage between education systems and levels of representation across international organizations, it does offer an analysis of the success factors and educational programs for careers at international organizations.

PROFIO examines success determinants and educational programs for careers with international organizations. The main objectives of the project are as follows:

- An analysis of the recruitment techniques of a sample of international organizations with regard to the qualification profiles and factors determining the success of applicants and staff.
- An analysis of the educational and professional backgrounds of employees in the professional categories at these international organizations.
- An examination of German and foreign degree programs and other educational opportunities that are classified as being especially helpful for a career with international organizations.
- The development of a model for the educational ideal offerings, including extra-curricular activities.

To attain these objectives, PROFIO takes different approaches. First, we carry out qualitative interviews with human resources staff, staff in charge of recruitment within their own department, and regular staff members. Second, quantitative surveys examine the educational and professional backgrounds of employees working for international organizations.

There are two reasons why we choose to examine the World Bank in greater detail. First, as a mul-

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough analysis of German representation in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund see: Berliner Initiative (2002): Förderung deutscher Präsenz in den Bretton Woods Institutionen.

tilateral financial organization, the World Bank exhibits different institutional mandates and approaches to governance than other international organizations; e.g. the OSCE and the European Union, which have also been examined by PROFIO. Such differences in mandates and governance are, in turn, a function of the World Bank's body of employees, its personnel structure and recruitment policies. Hence, we seek to examine the qualification requirements for and tasks and responsibilities of World Bank employees, more specifically. Second, the level of German higher level staff representation at the World Bank has been consistently low when measured against Germany's contributions to the World Bank's budget. For several years, Germany has placed third highest in terms of donations, ranking only below the United States and Japan. Hence, we would like to examine its personnel structures and recruitment policies more closely.

This report is structured as follows: The first section offers a descriptive overview of the World Bank along several dimensions. We look at the World Bank's mandate, its activities and functional structure introduce the reader to the various tasks and responsibilities employees can have. In addition, we discuss the recruitment and promotion procedures of World Bank staff. In the second section, we explain our research methodology and steps taken to implement the study. In the third section, we present the main findings of our study derived from 27 qualitative interviews with World Bank staff. Based on evidence gathered through the interviews, we draw plausible inferences with respect to our main research objectives. That is: We offer a set of skills and qualifications that appear to be necessary for employees to perform their tasks and responsibilities effectively. Further, we gauge the extent to which such skills and qualifications are effectively taught at the university level. Finally, we offer two sets of recommendations that derive from the analyses above: (1) for students interested pursuing a career at the World Bank and (2) for universities interested in developing curricula that prepare its students for a career at the World Bank.

## 2 The World Bank Group

### 2.1 Activities, Objectives and Functional Structure

The World Bank Group's mandate is to enhance developing country growth and reduce poverty, with the objective of achieving a "world without poverty." It provides resources, shares knowledge, builds capacity and forges partnerships in the public and private sectors of developing countries.<sup>2</sup> It is composed of five closely associated institutions, which operate under a common board but with different functions. These institutions include:<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1:



The term "World Bank" refers specifically to two of the five institutions: IBRD and IDA. In their function of supplying low-interest loans, interest-free credit and grants to developing countries, each of the two multilateral development institutions plays a different but equally supportive role in the World Bank's mission to combat poverty reduction and the improvement of living standards. Through the IBRD and IDA, the World Bank offers two basic types of loans: investment loans and development policy loans.<sup>4</sup> While the former are directed at goods, works and services in support of economic and social development projects, the latter are designated at supporting a country's policy and institutional reforms.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank (2006). "About Us: Challenge." Retrieved May 15, 2006 from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040565~menuPK:1696892~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. (2006). "About Us." Retrieved May 15, 2006 from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,pagePK:50004410~piPK:36602~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. (2006). "About Us: Operations." Retrieved April 6, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20103838~menuPK:1697023~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

What distinguishes the World Bank from other development banks and institutions is its simultaneous combination of multiple functions and activities. It serves as a financial intermediary, aid agency, development research institution, consulting firm and intergovernmental agency. Aside from its lending capacity, the World Bank offers analytic and advisory services to member countries. Drawing on analytic work from its own staff, the World Bank exposes causes, incidence and trends of poverty and develops country-specific solutions. What is noteworthy here is that the World Bank's development assistance is geared towards the specific needs of its clients. For each active borrower from the IBRD and IDA, the World Bank prepares a Country Assistance Strategy, whose starting point is the clients' own goals for their development. In consultation with government officials, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, the World Bank designs results-oriented development solutions in selected key areas. A "one size does not fit all" philosophy guides the provision of technical assistance, the improvement of government performance and delivery of services as well as the promotion of economic growth and poverty reduction programs. The UN Millennium Development Goals serve as the institution's roadmap for development.<sup>5</sup>

In 2005, IBRD and IDA lending amounted to US\$ 22.3 billion. The total lending fund for developing countries is generated by income earned from its subscribed capital and accumulated reserves. As a market-based institution, the IBRD's lending is primarily financed through the sale of AAA-rated bonds in the world's financial markets. The lion's share of its income comes from lending out its own capital. This capital consists of reserves built up over the years and money paid in from the bank's 184 member country shareholders. The number of shares a country has is based roughly on the size of its economy. The United States is the largest single shareholder, with 16.86 percent of the votes, followed by Japan (7.87 percent), Germany (4.49 percent), the United Kingdom (4.31 percent), France (4.31 percent), Canada (2.79 percent) and Italy (2.79 percent). The rest of the shares are divided among the other member countries. IBRD's income also pays for the World Bank operating expenses and has contributed to IDA and debt relief. The IDA's lending, which accounts for 40 percent of the World Bank's overall lending, is ensured through contributions of 40 donor countries every three years. These 40 countries generally have a higher economic standing than the remaining 125 IDA members states.<sup>6</sup>

Project cooperation between the World Bank and other private and public sector institutions on development issues is frequent. Projects partners vary by project but typically include governments in developing and industrialized countries, development agencies, private sector stakeholders, NGOs, research institutes, international organizations and other international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The World Bank also seeks to disseminate development knowledge and increase understanding of development policies and programs among its staff and external actors. It maintains an active research unit, which is composed of scholars and analysts. In their Development Research line, for instance, Bank staff and outside experts produce the widely-read annual World Development Re-

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Country Assistance Strategies." Retrieved April 6, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,contentMDK:20120746~menuPK:51557~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html>

<sup>6</sup> Deutscher Exekutivdirektor bei der Weltbank. (2005). World Bank Jahresbericht 2005. Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://www.worldbank.org/eds05>



port. In the Prospects and Development unit, members provide information, analysis and advice on global trends in the world economy. In the area of Development Data, experts focus, inter alia, on analytical and statistical work related to monitoring the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and the maintenance of databases.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the World Bank is proactive in designing activities that enhance knowledge sharing and learning around the globe. The World Bank Institute, for instance, hosts the Global Development Learning Network, a global partnership of more than 70 learning centers committed to development and to strengthening networks among, inter alia think tanks, government agencies, and NGOs.<sup>8</sup> Another means for knowledge sharing and capacity building is the World Bank's Scholarship and Fellowship Program. The program targets mid-career professionals from the developing world by financing graduate study opportunities at renowned universities throughout member countries.<sup>9</sup>

Through a high-volume publication record, the World Bank makes its expertise and development engagement accessible to a wide audience. Most publications are accessible through an online database, which holds over 15,000 free, downloadable documents. The publications include the World Bank's Annual Report, operational documents covering the World Bank's projects, its analytical and advisory work as well as country-specific development program evaluations.

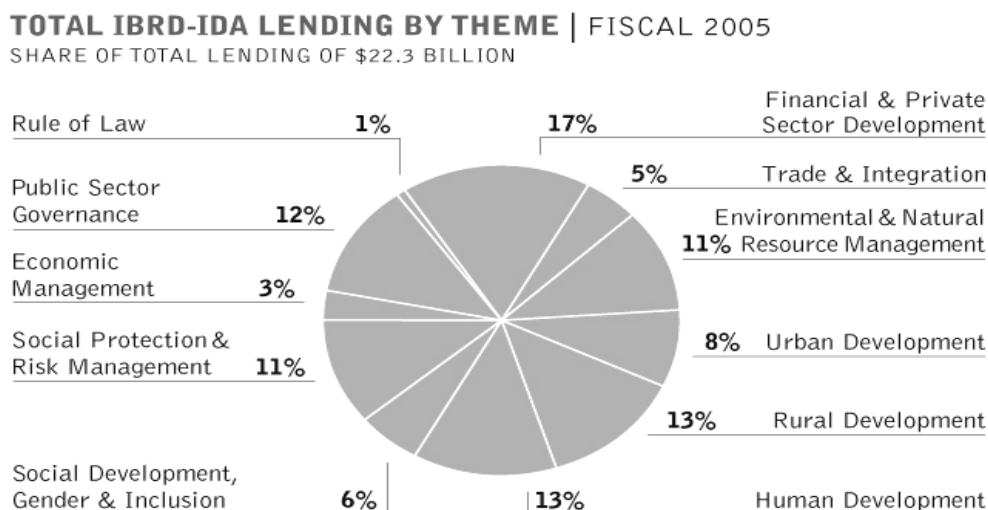
Backed by its mix of money and knowledge, the World Bank is active globally, across a variety of development themes. The Bank's country assistance portfolio may include, inter alia, projects to improve health and education, fight corruption, increase agricultural production, build roads and ports as well as protecting the environment. In the 2005 fiscal more than 250 projects were financed.

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Data & Research: About Us." Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/0,,contentMDK:20279993~menuPK:477172~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:469372,00.html>

<sup>8</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Learning: Global Development Learning Network." Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/0,,contentMDK:20379251~menuPK:795512~pagePK:209023~piPK:207535~theSitePK:213799,00.html>

<sup>9</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Learning: Scholarships." Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/EXTWBISFP/0,,menuPK:551559~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:551553,00.html>

Figure 2: World Bank Lending by Theme, 2005<sup>10</sup>

Across the globe, the World Bank is represented with 109 country offices in six regions and headquarters in Washington, D.C. Approximately one third of some 10,000 development professionals work in country offices in the developing world, with about 30 percent of staff hired locally. Of the US\$ 22.3 billion in lending in 2005, 22 percent went into programs in South Asia, 17 percent to sub-Saharan Africa, 6 percent to the Middle East and North Africa, 13 percent to East Asia and Pacific, 24 percent to Latin America and the Caribbean and 18 percent to Europe and Central Asia.<sup>11</sup>

The World Bank is managed by representatives of its 184 member countries. The countries are represented by the Board of Governors, which is the ultimate decision-making authority with respect to policy-making. Typically, the governors are ministers of finance or ministers of development of the member countries and meet annually. Since continuous, on-site member representation is necessary, specific duties are delegated to 24 Executive Directors. While the five largest shareholders - the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and France - appoint their Executive Directors, the remaining countries are represented by 19 bi-annually elected executive directors. Since 2005, Paul Wolfowitz has been the President of the World Bank Group.<sup>12</sup>

The World Bank's operations are primarily coordinated through a matrix environment composed of six thematic networks and six regional networks. The six thematic networks are: Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (ESSD), Financial Sector (FS), Human Development (HDN), Infrastructure (INF), Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) and Private Sector Development (PSD). The six regional networks are: South Asia, Africa, Middle East and North Africa, East Asia and Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Central Asia. In addition, the World Bank has 13 other operational units, which include, inter alia, Human Resources, External Affairs & UN Programs, the World Bank Institute and Controlling.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank. (2005). "About Us: Annual Report, Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTANNREP/0,,menuPK:1397243~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:1397226,00.html>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank. (2006). "About Us: Organization." Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040580~menuPK:1696997~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE WORLD BANK - May 8, 2006



<sup>13</sup> World Bank. (2006). "About Us: Organization." Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040580~menuPK:1696997~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>

## 2.2 Personnel Structures

In 2005, the World Bank Group counted 10,745 staff members in total; of which 7,216 staff were located in Washington and 3,539 worked in country offices. The lion's share of World Bank Group staff works for the IBRD and IDA; that is, approximately 8,800 in 2005.<sup>14</sup>

The World Bank Group's hiring focus is on mid-career professionals with considerable work experience in relevant areas for the institutions, between the ages of 35 and 50. Typical professional backgrounds include: economists, educators, environmental scientists, financial analysts, anthropologists, engineers and many others.

The World Bank Group has an eleven-stage grade level system ranging from technical assistants to Managers of the President's team. Internationally recruited, high level employees, hold grade levels GF and above:<sup>15</sup>

- *Grade levels K and J* apply to senior managers, preferably with a Ph.D., and extensive relevant work and management experience.
- *Grade levels I and H* apply to managers and specialists, preferably with a Ph.D. and substantial relevant work experience. Employees either pursue a career the technical or the managerial stream. Their responsibilities vary by portfolio but include staff supervision, project design, analysis, budget management, etc.
- *Grade levels F and G* apply to professionals with a higher education and considerable relevant work experience and technical expertise. While employees on level G are recognized professionals who can lead tasks, do policy work, advise governments, and represent the World Bank, F-level staff do similar tasks but they are under supervision of senior employees.
- *Grade level E* applies to analysts without a graduate degree. They typically support professional staff and have lower levels of responsibility.
- *Grade levels A to D* apply to administrative and client support staff.

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<sup>14</sup> Deutscher Exekutivdirektor bei der Weltbank. (2005). "World Bank Jahresbericht 2005". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://www.worldbank.org/eds05>

<sup>15</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

Table 1: The table below offers an overview of the World Bank Group's staff categories.

Grade	Typical Title		Category	Minimum Relevant Professional Work Experience and Education
K	Managing Director, CFO, General Counsel		Senior Manager	15 years with Ph.D. or M.A.
J	Vice-President		Senior Manager	15 years with Ph.D. or M.A.
I	Director	Chief Economist	Mid-level Manager / Senior Specialist	12 years with Ph.D. or 15 years with M.A.
H	Manager	Lead Economist	Entry-level Manager / Specialist	10 years with Ph.D. or 12 years with M.A.
G	Senior Officer / Program Manager		Senior Professional	8 years with Ph.D. or M.A.
F	Officer		Professional	5 years with Ph.D. or M.A.
E	Analyst		Professional	2 years with B.A.
D - A	Program Assistant		Administrative and Client Support (ACS)	Technical Certificates

Another important, yet legally distinct category in the World Bank Group's personnel structure is contracted staff. Depending on demand, the World Bank seeks out contractors, typically referred to as short-term consultants, to provide certain services to advance the work of the Bank's respective units. Typically, short-term consultancies are termed assignments and range from one day to a year, often with the possibility of extension. Consultancies can also vary in scope. While some contracts entail simple program support or research activities, others demand highly qualified advising services. Equally flexible is the consultant's financial compensation, which derives from his/her qualifications and nature of the services provided. Consultants are either identified by World Bank staff because of their reputation in the field or selected through the World Bank's website, where CVs can be posted individually. Of the entire staff of the World Bank Group, the share of consultants is currently at approximately 20 percent.<sup>16</sup>

Diversity is an important objective of the World Bank Group. Currently, its staff represent more than 160 nationalities. Approximately 60 percent of its staff come from developing countries; their representatives hold 37 percent of management and senior technical positions. Women account for around 52 percent of World Bank staff and hold around one-fourth of management and senior technical positions. Nationals from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean hold 16 percent of all staff positions and 8 percent of management and senior technical positions. The 28 Officers (Presi-

<sup>16</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

dent, Managing Directors, Senior Vice Presidents, Vice Presidents, Director General) of the World Bank include 9 developing country nationals, 4 women, and 6 sub-Saharan African nationals.<sup>17</sup>

The distribution of IBDR capital shares typically serves as a measure to monitor the distribution of nationalities in higher level posts, though no official quota system exists. As the leading IBRD share holder, the United States represents about 25 percent of the overall population of higher level staff; that is, 1,110 employees. While Germany holds the third largest capital share (4,49 percent), its representation among internationally recruited higher level staff is only at 2.7 percent, or 121 employees. Compared to other major stakeholders like the United Kingdom, France and Canada, Germany's overall level of representation is low. Even greater discrepancies between contribution and representation are exhibited by Japan.

Table 2: Major Donor Countries and Staff Representation<sup>18</sup>

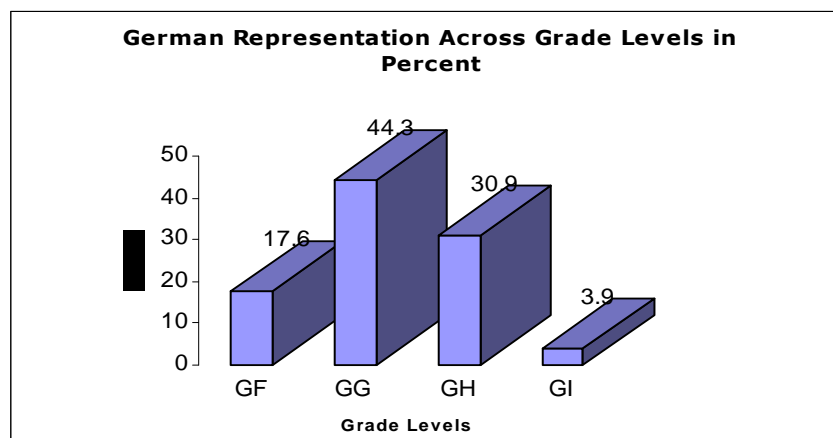
Member States	Higher Level Posts in 2005	Percent of Higher Level Posts in 2005	IBRD Capital Share in 2005
Total	4410	100,00 %	100,00%
USA	1110	25,2%	16,86%
Japan	88	2,0%	7,87%
Germany	121	2,7%	4,49%
UK	253	5,7%	4,31%
France	224	5,1%	4,31%
Canada	168	3,8%	2,79%
Italy	98	2,2%	2,79%

In 2006, German representation is slightly higher and will sum up to approximately 136 Germans in higher level posts and a 3,1% share of higher level World Bank staff. A closer look at the distribution of German across higher level posts shows that nearly half of all Germans hold senior professional posts. Most Germans are situated on the Senior Professional levels (GG). Less than 20 percent are represented on the professional level (GF). On the management level Germans are fairly well represented. At the Director level, Germany currently holds around eight percent. The highest position a German national holds is currently one of 26 Vice-Presidencies.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> World Bank. (2006). "About Us: Annual Report". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTANNREP/EXTANNREP2K5/0,,contentMDK:20639999~menuPK:1605938~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:1397343,00.html>

<sup>18</sup> Deutscher Exekutivdirektor bei der Weltbank. (2005). "World Bank Jahresbericht 2005". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://www.worldbank.org/eds05>

<sup>19</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

Figure 4: German Staff Representation Across Grade Levels<sup>20</sup>

In the category of short-term consultants, Germany exhibits even lower representation than in the higher level category. In 2005, only 196, that is, 2.4 percent of all short-term consultants in the World Bank Group's headquarters in Washington D.C. were Germans. Again, the United States leads this category by far. However, it should be noted that for short-term assignments U.S. citizens clearly have a home-field advantage.<sup>21</sup>

Since the World Bank Group primarily focuses on the recruitment of mid-career professionals, it is typically not viewed as a starting point for a professional career in development. However, there are several opportunities open to students and recent graduates with limited work exposure to either pursue a development career within in the World Bank or gain practical experience for a limited amount of time.

For entry-level positions, the World Bank recruits staff through its competitive Young Professionals (YP) Program. The YP Program is designed to recruit highly qualified and motivated young people with leadership potential, who are skilled in areas relevant to the World Bank's operations. Aside from attracting talent and excellence, the program's mid- and long-term function is the smooth and effective integration of YPs into the work and business culture of the World Bank. In 2005, 734 YPs were active in the World Bank; more than half of the Bank's Vice-Presidencies and Country Director positions are held by former YPs respectively.<sup>22</sup> Typical educational and/or professional backgrounds of selected YPs include: economics, finance, education, public health, social sciences, engineering, urban planning and natural resource management. Formal requirements include that applicants must not be older than 32 years and have three to four years of work experience in a relevant field with a Master's degree or one to two years of relevant work experience with a Ph.D. Between 8,000 and 10,000 applications are submitted each year but only 30 to 40 Young Profes-

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Deutscher Exekutivdirektor bei der Weltbank. (2005). "World Bank Jahresbericht 2005". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://www.worldbank.org/eds05>

<sup>22</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

sionals are recruited.<sup>23</sup> The recruitment process is rigorous and incorporates motivational writing assignments and assessment centers. Once selected, YPs spend up to 20 months rotating throughout the World Bank before they are placed in a permanent higher level staff position in the World Bank.<sup>24</sup>

The Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Program represents another opportunity for recent graduates to gain work experience in the World Bank. The Program is funded solely by a few donor countries and currently includes agreements between the World Bank and Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and Sweden. While the respective countries advertise the JPO posts on a yearly basis and undertake the initial screening of applicants, the World Bank's hiring managers interview candidates and make the final selection. Depending on the agreement, JPOs are hired for two or three years to work either at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington D.C. or in one of its country offices. The JPOs' placements and responsibilities in the World Bank vary by demand and the JPO's background. The minimum formal requirements are that applicants must not be older than 32 years, have a minimum of two years' experience in related field and be fluent in English (and preferably speak another Bank language). For Germany, the JPO program is an important initiative to improve its representation in the World Bank Group in particular, and in international organizations in general. It is not unusual for JPOs to be hired into higher level staff positions once their contracts expire. In 2005, three German JPOs were recruited into the World Bank.<sup>25</sup>

The Junior Professional Associate (JPA) Program is a learning and developmental opportunity for graduates with no outside work experience to become exposed to World Bank affairs. JPAs are primarily assigned to support research and data analysis. The JPA's contract is on a two-year, non-renewable basis. Once the contract expires, the JPAs are not considered for higher level recruitment. However, the World Bank offers membership in a professional alumni network, which sustains linkages between the JPA and the World Bank in the future. The minimum formal requirements are as follows: applicants must not be older than 28 years, demonstrate excellent academic standing, possess strong analytical and research skills in areas pertinent to the World Bank's development fields and be fluent in English (and preferably speak another Bank language). In 2005, five Germans out of a total of 188 JPAs were recruited.<sup>26</sup>

While consultancies are demand-based and are independent of the World Bank's internal personnel stream and career development opportunities (such as the YP program), it is not uncommon for consultants to be recruited into high level staff positions once their contracts expire or at later stages in their professional careers. Here, exposure to the World Bank's activities is key and allows for the strengthening of relevant development experience, gaining insights into World Bank affairs, and establishing a profile. While many short-term consultants already possess considerable work experience and are hired for their expertise in a relevant area, a number of consultancies do not

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Jobs: Young Professionals Program". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJBS/0,,contentMDK:20519630~menuPK:1477630~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>

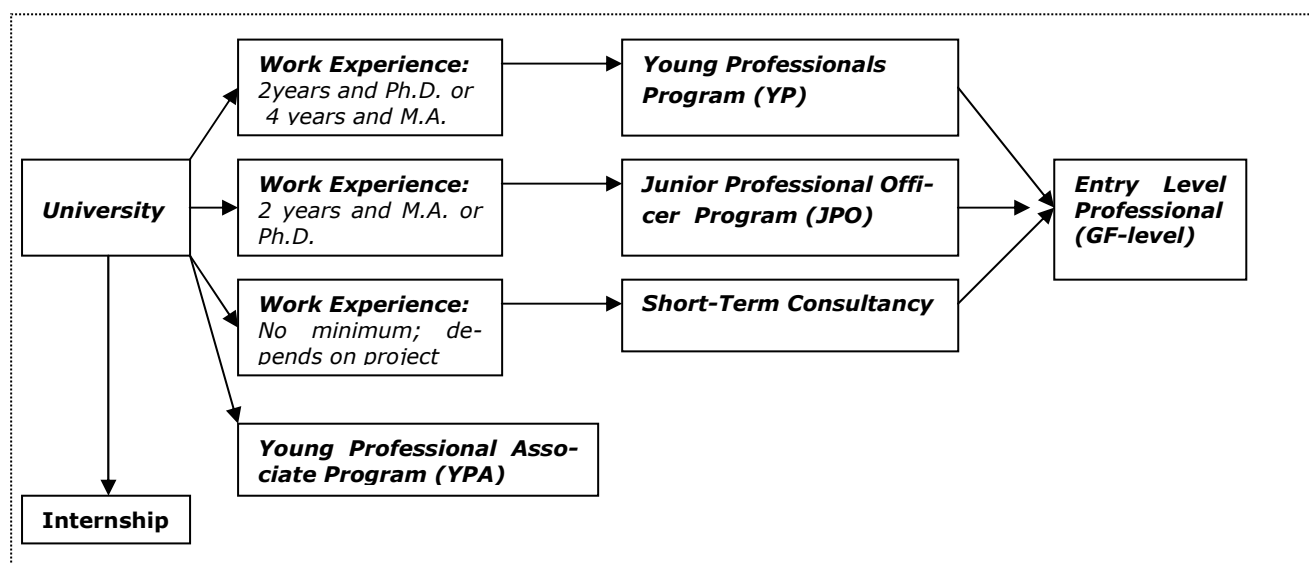
<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Jobs: Junior Professionals Associate Program". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJBS/0,,contentMDK:20515930~menuPK:1477636~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>



require a long professional history. Recent graduates with little work experience are typically hired to perform, inter alia, research, program support, and/or coordination activities.

Figure 5: Entry Level Opportunities for Recent Graduates<sup>27</sup>



Internships at the World Bank are in high demand, attracting a large number of highly qualified candidates around the world. Through its summer and winter internship programs, the World Bank opens its doors to students pursuing a Master's degree or a Ph.D. It integrates interns into development activities and offers them an opportunity to hone their technical, primarily research-related skills for a period of three months.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.3 Recruitment and Promotion Procedures

The World Bank recruits at all levels. That is, for entry, mid-career and senior positions. For the purpose of this study, the recruitment and promotion procedures below will refer to the hiring of higher level staff, which applies to positions on grade levels GF and higher. With the exception of U.S. citizens, the majority of higher level staff is recruited internationally.<sup>29</sup>

The World Bank's recruitment process begins well before the actual advertisement of posts. It starts with regular strategic staffing exercises, which are primarily research-based. Strategic staffing engages both the respective unit's managers and Human Resources (HR). The Vice-Presidents' units assess skills and qualifications needed to advance the World Bank's work in general and specific project lines in particular. If World Bank strategies shift, so does the demand for skills and capabilities.

<sup>27</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

<sup>28</sup> World Bank. (2006). "Jobs: World Bank Internship Program". Retrieved May 15, 2006, from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTHRJOBS/0,,contentMDK:20515785~menuPK:1477648~pagePK:64262408~piPK:64262191~theSitePK:1058433,00.html>

<sup>29</sup> The subsequent information on the World Bank's recruitment procedures was gathered through interviews with staff of the Human Resources Unit.

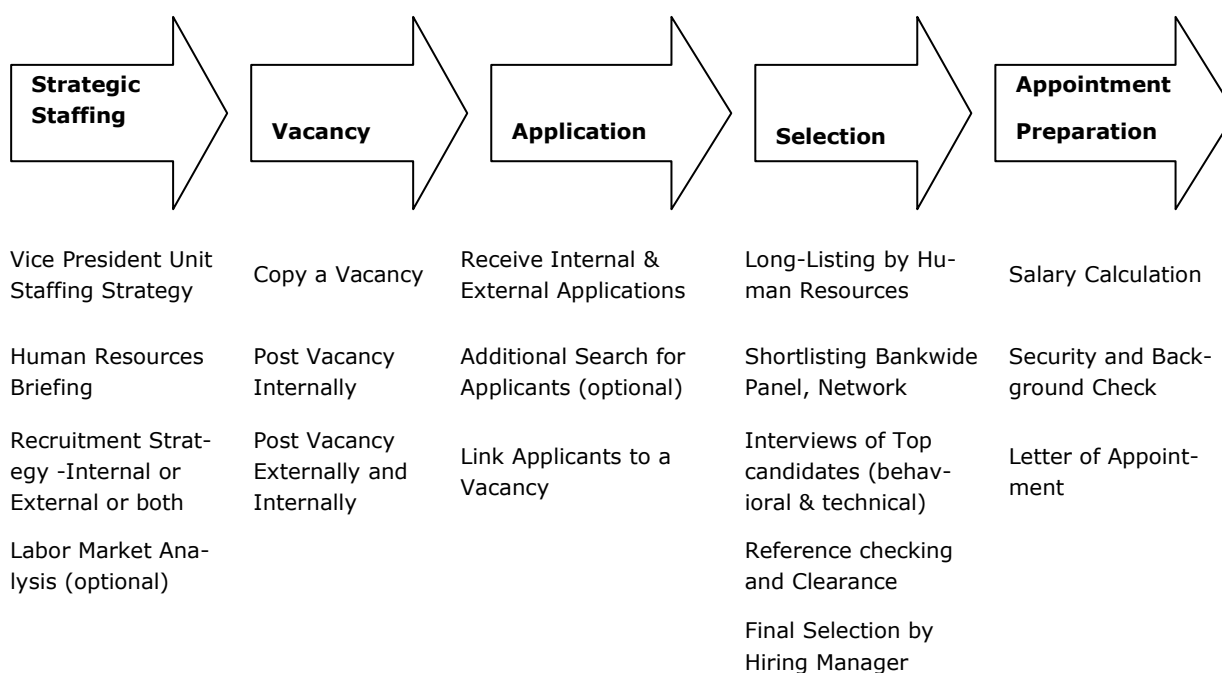
While hiring managers direct the recruitment process, the Human Resources unit typically designs and proposes a suitable search strategy and a job description. The scope of the search strategy varies by the type of skills in demand. If skills are rare, for instance, thorough labor market studies are key to identify highly qualified candidates. If skills are not rare, online posting might suffice.

Currently, approximately 60 to 70 percent of positions are filled through the internal World Bank market, where employees can apply for higher level positions, which would be equivalent to a promotion. Over time, the ratio of internal versus external hires has been in flux, however; and is primarily determined by budgetary constraints. External recruitment strategies can range from targeted searches to posting a vacancy on the World Bank's website. Targeted searches include networking with universities or other development institutions as well as advertising campaigns. Typical job marketing venues may include magazines and newspapers like the Economist, Financial Times, Washington Post, New York Times, specialized magazines and other websites.

Diversity criteria factor prominently into the development of recruitment strategies. They determine which markets to target and where to look for potential candidates. While diversity principles are important, however, the World Bank's recruitment philosophy is guided by quality and merit. That is, the most qualified candidate is most likely to be offered the job.

Once applications for a particular posting are received online, HR Officers prescreen the candidates. If applicants do not fulfill the minimum formal criteria for a job, their applications will not be considered. Once prescreening is completed, the candidates who comply with the formal requirements of the job profile are pooled. If necessary, written tests on substantive topics and/or English skills are administered and serve as complementary information in the selection process. In a subsequent step, Human Resources Officers establish a long-list, which ranks the top ten to fifteen most qualified applicants for the job. The hiring manager, then, is responsible for reducing the long-list down to the most qualified four to six candidates. For network positions, the short-listed candidates need to be discussed and ultimately cleared by a Bank-wide panel, the so-called Sector Board. Typically, the Board includes all relevant actors in the recruitment process; these are managers from the respective networks, peers and Human Resources staff. For non-network positions, like HR posts, this additional step does not apply. All short-listed candidates are invited to interviews either at the World Bank's headquarters or one of the country offices. The interviews cover both technical aspects of the job and behavioral competencies. While no standard list of interview questions exists across different posts, the World Bank seeks to ensure fair assessment and treatment of all candidates.

Simultaneously, the Human Resources unit undertakes reference checking of the interviewees. While the interview panel may request additional interview rounds, the final recruitment decision is made by the hiring manager. Decisions should be based on objective, job-related and behavioral criteria, while taking into consideration the representation of, inter alia, gender and nationalities.

Figure 6: Standard Recruitment Phases for Higher Level Positions<sup>30</sup>

Promotions at the World Bank can be obtained in two ways: First and most frequently, promotions are obtained through a competitive selection process. Employees apply for higher level positions, which involve standard evaluation practices that include interviews, a hiring panel, and the hiring manager as the final decision-maker. The competitive character of promotion represents the World Bank's emphasis on transparency with respect to promoting its staff. Second and less often, employees are promoted strategically. Strategic assignments occur when very specific qualifications are in demand, which only few employees can offer. In this case, the hiring manager can request a promotion. Such strategic assignments are limited, however. On average, 70 percent of the promotions are competitive; the remaining 30 percent are strategic.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, the World Bank promotion system does not follow the principle of seniority. It is based on skills and merit, be it through the competitive or strategic lens. Promotion decisions are made by the respective Sector Boards.

Career opportunities for World Bank staff are ample, as the institution currently appears to favor internal as opposed to external hiring, particularly with respect to management positions. Only around five percent of the positions are advertised externally.<sup>32</sup> The average age of managers is currently around 48 years. The official retirement age for World Bank staff is 62 years.

<sup>30</sup> World Bank. (2006). Information by staff of Human Resources Unit

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

### 3 Research Design

We applied qualitative research methods to address our research questions. To be sure, qualitative research bodes well for the study at hand: Little systematic research has been done on the sets of skills and qualifications necessary for excelling professionally in international organizations; much less even on curriculum development and design, which specifically refers to careers in international organizations. With qualitative interviews, we are able to directly experience and observe the subject matter under investigation through the lens of World Bank staff. Such direct exposure allows us to get a better feel for the World Bank's work context in general, and insights in how skills and qualifications tend to be perceived by individual employees; and how they seem to affect recruitment specifically. In the process, we are able to both detect relevant terminology pertinent to our study and create a list of both categories and variables that affect the phenomenon under study. Once the raw data is organized, we are able to observe initial patterns and trends among the respondents' answers, which serves as the basis for drawing inferences in a more general manner.

One member of the PROFIO research team conducted 26 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with World Bank employees; of which 23 are higher level staff, two have extendable consultancy contracts, and one is a Junior Professional Officer. Thus, the majority of respondents are higher level staff. They represent the primary target group of our study since we expect them to have experience with the World Bank's recruitment procedures and informed insights about skills and qualifications necessary to excel professionally at the World Bank. All higher level staff have several years of work experience; some are in the position of hiring staff, others take part in the interview process. We include consultants and a JPO, all below 32 years of age, because we want to include their perspectives with respect to career opportunities for recent graduates. The interview participants differed across grade levels, nationality, sex, and age. A more detailed breakdown of our sample is presented in section 4.

To ensure consistency across participants, we used the same set of questions addressing the topics that are of central importance to the PROFIO project. Simultaneously, we allowed for participants to go "off topic" and address issues they deemed interesting and/or relevant. In addition, we pursued our interviewees' remarks if we thought clarification was necessary and/or if some of the issues raised lend themselves to further investigation. We conducted the interviews in English and recorded the respondents' answers. Once the interview process was completed, interviews were transcribed in full length and coded according to exhaustive themes or categories. Finally, the data was analyzed to identify patterns among respondents' answers with respect to our research questions. All interview participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

The following sequence of steps was taken in carrying out the study:

- (1) The Office of the German Executive Director ensured his support for the PROFIO research team to carry out the study.
- (2) The Office of the German Executive Director and Human Resources Management provided the PROFIO research team with names and e-mail addresses of World Bank professionals.
- (3) Potential interview candidates were contacted by e-mail, which contained an invitation to participate in the interview, a short project description, and the sets of questions the re-

searcher would ask.

- (4) The interviews were carried out in two phases. The first round took place between February 9 and 15 and the second round from March 7 to 9, 2006.
- (5) The recorded versions of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed.
- (6) The Human Resource Management and the Office of the Executive Director will receive a preliminary version of the study.

#### 4 Results - Sample Statistics and Evaluation

This section presents the main findings derived from 26 interviews with World Bank staff. The central themes include an analysis of the interviewees' educational backgrounds, skills, qualifications, and the recruitment process. Moreover, a sub-sample analysis of German respondents allows us to assess the level of job-preparedness the respondents gained through their education in Germany. In addition, we briefly discuss potential causes for German underrepresentation at the World Bank as identified by our interviewees.

The sample of our study includes mostly higher level staff at the World Bank, ranging from Officer to Director positions. In addition, the sample also contains one Program Analyst, one Junior Professional Officer, and three Consultants. Thus, we are able to cover different levels of professional experience, and entry opportunities for people interested in pursuing a career in the World Bank. The sample contains twelve male and fifteen female interviewees. The respondents come from different units in the World Bank, thus allowing us to collect information on and analyze a variety of different professional and educational backgrounds relevant to the World Bank. Our sample is also diverse in terms of career length, ranging from less than three years to over twenty years. Thus, we are able to take different professional outlooks and experiences into account. Finally, our interviewees come from a number of different countries and regions. Such a diverse composition with respect to national backgrounds makes our study global in scope. To get a good understanding of German representation at the World Bank we included eight Germans into our sample, which will allow us to examine separately, through a sub-sample analysis. Although an N of eight is rather small, we might still be able to discuss our findings in light of a broader critique of the German education system. The subsequent table offers initial descriptive statistics of our sample:

Table 3: Sample Statistics of World Bank Interviewees

Area	N	World Bank Career (in years)	N	Grade Level	N	Nationality	N	Gender	N
Poverty Reduction and Economic Management	5	<3	9	H, I	5	Austrian	2	Male	12
Human Development	8	3-10	12	G	8	Belgian	1	Female	15
Infrastructure	3	11-20	3	F	9	British	1		
Strategy Operations	2	>20	3	A-D	1	Chinese	1		
Information Solutions	1			JPO	1	French	1		
Controlling	1			Consultant	3	German	8		
Human Resources	8					Indian	2		

Inspection Panel	1	Italian	2
		Mexican	1
		Russian	1
		Portuguese	1
		Saudi Arabian	1
		Swedish	1
		Turkish	1
N = 26		US-American	3

#### 4.1 Motivation for a career at the World Bank

Careers in international organizations are the result of a variety of different aspects that are shaped, inter alia, by people's educational and professional experiences. Motivational aspects in particular drive peoples' career choices. Questions about a candidate's motivation are part of almost every recruitment process. Our study starts out by examining our respondents' motivations for choosing an international development career at the World Bank. By addressing the World Bank specifically, we receive early insights into what respondents think about their employer and the institution's work in general.

From the outset, the majority of respondents referred to **interest in international work** as their baseline motivation for a career in international organizations. More specifically, many identified a **passion for development** as a primary catalyst for pursuing a career in development. What was mentioned fairly consistently throughout was that the World Bank was considered a potential employer from early on; starting either at university or early field work experiences. Only three respondents mentioned that they did not specifically seek out the World Bank as an employer specifically. Instead: it just "fell into place." As the following comments exemplify, many respondents think of the World Bank as the "ultimate" or "best" development institution -- a factor that appears to bear significantly on respondents' decision to apply for a career within the World Bank:

*"I was interested in issues of development as a graduate student. I felt the option of going back to my own country and doing it there was not a realistic one for myself. And therefore the World Bank was for me the most attractive to work on development issues."*

*"My primary field is economic development and my secondary field is public finance. I am one of those lucky people who is doing exactly what I wanted to do from almost day one when I went to college, which was to do public finance for government expenditures and health education, and social assistance programs. And lucky me, I am doing it in the World Bank. [...] It is the ultimate development institution."*

*"I have always wanted to work on international stuff and I have always wanted to work as an economist and not as a person with economic training who is really substituting for a manager or a lawyer or a business person. If you look at where you can work internationally as an economist in an international environment, there are not many IOs worldwide, where one can do that. The World Bank is one of them and probably the best."*

When we ask the respondents to identify more specifically the aspects that make the World Bank's developmental approach appealing to them, several respondents refer to the two main functions of

the World Bank. These are: (1) the World Bank's function as a knowledge bank, which aims at generating, disseminating and sharing knowledge and (2) the World Bank's function as a lender, which provides financial assistance to client countries. Such an intricate **mix of money and knowledge** distinguishes the World Bank from many other development organizations (e.g. UNDP) or international financial institutions (e.g. IMF). To respondents with previous experience in other international organizations or development agencies, the **breadth of the World Bank's development engagement** across a wide range of issue areas and regions served as an important motivational factor. Through a comparative lens, one respondent with work experience at the UN suggested that the only institution that would allow exposure to an even broader range of issues was the World Bank. The World Bank's **policy-oriented research approach** served as an important catalyst for some respondents with an academic background: Here, emphasis was placed on a major development principle of the World Bank: That is, to produce applied knowledge with the objective of providing advisory services and solutions for policy-makers and authorities of client countries. The following comments exemplify some of the motivational aspects driving respondents' choices to apply for and pursue a development career at the World Bank:

*"Number one, it [World Bank] does a lot of thinking and analytical work, but number two it also lends money. So it has the combination of thinking and doing. In most organizations you either do one or the other."*

*"I started working for UN but at some point it becomes natural to try reach the World Bank since this is the organization with probably the largest range of development issues."*

*"And here at the Bank [...] the research was policy-oriented. I found it much more interesting because we had problems that were identified by the government. And we were basically trying to find specific solutions and trying to address concerns of the government. But not just a theoretical discussion. And our output of our work was discussed with the policy makers. And it was decided whether to follow our recommendation or not. But we were reaching directly the policy makers, while in academia you do not reach the policy makers."*

Aside from its development focus, one respondent highlights the World Bank's international standing as a "top-notch" **knowledge management institution**, competing with private sector consulting firms. Unlike the great majority of interviewees, this one respondent's motivation is not related to development; however, interest in international work specifically a multi-cultural environment is also articulated. The following comment speaks to the World Bank's quality work in the area of knowledge management and knowledge sharing.

*"The Bank is considered as a top notch institution for knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the world. And it actually comes equally or on top of management consulting firms like Mc Kinsey. So in KM or knowledge management conferences, you will see the Bank is very much present."*

An examination of the motivational background of the respondents suggests a pattern that links interest in international work, and to a somewhat lesser extent in development, to pursuing a career at the World Bank. While many other international organizations would satisfy the interest in international development work also, what appears to serve as an additional motivational factor is the World Bank's distinct approach to development: Its different functions (as knowledge bank and

financier), coupled with its breadth across developmental areas and geographical regions, seem to attract both recent graduates and mid-career professionals interested in international and/or development work as well as researchers. In the subsequent sections, references to motivational aspects will recur frequently, as they are conditioned by respondents' education and work experience.

## 4.2 Educational Background – An assessment

One very important qualification for working at the World Bank is strong academic credentials. This section examines several dimensions related to the respondents' educational backgrounds. It offers a more detailed analysis of several educational aspects that factor into the establishment and pursuit of a career within the World Bank. These include, specific skills acquired during one's education, field of study, as well as levels and types of education.

### 4.2.1 Relevance of Education

When asked to evaluate their educational backgrounds in terms of relevance to and preparation for their work at the World Bank, the respondents' answers covered a wide range of possible replies, ranging from "useless" to "perfect," only to name the extreme ends of the continuum. The majority of respondents, however, rate their education as useful. Some are very content. What is of particular interest here is that positive evaluations of the educational background referred largely, though not all, to experiences at Anglo-Saxon universities. In section 4.2.3 we offer a more detailed analysis of the comparative advantages of Anglo-Saxon education in light of preparing its graduates for a career at the World Bank. The gros of negative assessments referred to European education systems. For instance: German respondents, with the exception of one, judge the German education as "not useful" and/or "not relevant" in preparing them for their professional career in general and/or their work at the World Bank in particular. We think that such a consistent pattern across German respondents deserves further investigation. Hence, in section 4. of this study we perform a sub-sample analysis, which contains data of eight German interviewees only. To avoid redundancy, we will exclude remarks on the German education system from the subsequent discussion of the usefulness and relevance of education for the interviewees' tasks and responsibilities at the World Bank. It includes, however, German respondents' evaluations of education gained outside of Germany (e.g. the United States or UK).

What remains fairly consistent across the respondents' answers is the view that the Bachelor's degree covers basics and breadth rather than depth. Thus, it may serve as a solid foundation but typically does not allow for specialization. Given the World Bank's emphasis on knowledge specialization, we therefore focus on evaluations of the interviewees more specialized education; that is, a graduate education leading up to either a Master's degree or a Ph.D.

When we ask the respondents to identify useful skills and qualifications gained through their education, we find significant overlap among the respondents' answers. For instance, many respondents say that their university education provided them with **sound theoretical and substantive knowledge** for their current area of employment. Thus, their education laid the groundwork for the further development and/or strengthening of their skills. The following comment highlights one interviewee's satisfaction with the educational experience:



*"My Master's and my Ph.D were in international macroeconomics. So I was familiar with the topic the World Bank deals with. [...] I was familiar with monetary policy, exchange rate policy, because all my research was on that. So it really gave me a good theoretical background."*

Moreover, the majority of the interviewees suggest that their education fostered the development of their **critical thinking** and **analytical skills**. In fact, analytical skills are most frequently mentioned and, simultaneously, rated most highly in their usefulness and relevance for the respondents' jobs at the World Bank. Such strong emphasis on analytical skills is not surprising given the nature of the World Bank's comprehensive approach to development assistance: It identifies problems in client countries, takes into account relevant research, establishes criteria for country-specific developmental solutions, constructs solutions consistent with the proposed criteria, implements the solution, and finally, regularly assesses its impact on development. According to most respondents who highlight analytical skills as particularly useful for their work, such skills were gained primarily through hands-on problem-solving exercises and situational projects during their educational programs. To them, exposure to critical and analytical thinking is considered vital to doing practical analytical work and developing pragmatic, solution-oriented approaches in their later professions, particularly at the World Bank. One respondent stresses that, through problem-solving exercises, she developed a **"can-do-it" attitude**, which facilitates professional effectiveness and impact at times when projects may appear overwhelming and responsibilities are great. Directly related to doing analytical work, some respondents also point to the usefulness of acquiring **quantitative skills** during their education. The subsequent set of comments highlights the usefulness and relevance of analytical skills for respondents' professional careers:

*"A lot of what I found useful at the university level, when I was doing my Master's, was situational projects. Your entire class is built on this one situational project. And you are either playing a role or solving a problem, a complex problem, with different people playing different roles. [...] You really go in-depth into the scenario, and you are not just learning things on a very high level. [...] You are learning about one particular situation and applying your management principles or your hard skills. You are applying all of that to one particular situation. That was really good."*

*"I learned how to solve problems and how to investigate solutions and policy options. It [problem solving] trains your mind. It specifically trains you to do things. I think that education gives you the skills of thinking, learning, searching for solutions."*

*"And it [hands-on problem solving] really throws you in a very different world, and also psychologically, all of a sudden you start realizing, you start seeing yourself in these kinds of positions, which is the exact opposite of what you learn in German universities. I am just talking about the underlying messages that you get at the Kennedy School like "you can do it", "you'll be in an interesting position of responsibility" later on and how would you deal with it, they prepare you for that."*

*"In terms of skills I would not say that any of the hard skills that were taught there are being used in my current job. But in terms of being able to think analytically and problem-solving it helped a lot"*

Further, respondents address important behavioral skills that they acquired during their education. **Intercultural, communication and team skills**, for instance, were rated as very important for

their work at the World Bank. Mostly gained either through attending educational programs with an international student body or pursuing studies with an international and/or development perspective, respondents rated these skills sets as vital for international work. Given the multi-cultural composition of the World Bank's staff as well as its extensive ties with clients from developing countries, the importance of intercultural and communication skills is apparent. Subsumed under both sets of skills, respondents also find that their education helped them acquire and/or develop their **writing skills**. Given the high volume of written communication and reporting within the World Bank as well as between staff and clients, good and effective writing skills are considered important; particularly in multi-lingual contexts, where English may be the lingua franca but not the native language of the majority. The following comments briefly illustrate the importance of both international studies and an international environment:

*"I think the intercultural communication came from Russian studies and studying at SAIS, where there are people from 60 different countries. So that's where I think I picked up the intercultural skills."*

*"I would say I didn't have any special training. But the environment of the schools is multicultural. I had to teach at Stanford so I just got thrown into it [...] That required me to communicate well."*

*"One thing that I liked about Kennedy School is that you worked in teams all the time, solved problems, case studies, and they always put teams together that maximized diversity and set also potential for conflict. I remember many times I have been very frustrated, because you were dealing with people from four different countries, age groups, and gender and it was just so complicated to first of all to draw out the same understanding of the problem at hand, but what we also learned is that if you were actually able to work through these frustration the output would be much better than if you had a homogenous group."*

Aside from skills, a number of respondents state that their education was relevant as it exposed them to **leading professionals** and **cutting-edge topics**. When interacting with and learning from leading professionals, interviewees claim that they gained a good sense of the "real world" and about potential career paths. They also stress the link between theory and application: Taking classes from leading professionals introduced them to the applied dimension of what they had learned in their respective programs. Similarly, some interviewees state that the study of cutting-edge topics supported their professional development. More specifically, they linked exposure to topics that figured prominently on the international agenda at the time to increase in their own innovation potential. That is, cutting-edge topics stimulated their own sense of innovation and added to their creativity. The following comments underline the value of these two educational aspects:

*"We had presidents and foreign ministers visit the school, which opens the mind tremendously. And they come for brown bag lunches, some of them. And you can actually have a discussion with global players."*

*"It [education] was very relevant because of where we were located. I don't know if it is unique to this area but the university I was at, the professors were generally working in the profession that I am in. So I was not in pure academia, I was actually taking classes from professors that worked in the federal contract area or worked for MIT. So for whatever reason all the education I got, when I got out and started working I was able to apply a lot of what I had learned."*

*"There is a lot of learning that happens, because you are constantly asked to research and find out*

*new areas of new other news where the real development is taking place or where the subject is being debated, expanded or whether there is a controversy on this particular topic, on this particular subject. So you are constantly innovating, so that adds to your creativity.”*

When we ask the respondents what was lacking from their university education but would serve them well for their current work, one respondent states that his or her education did not address how to **deal with authorities** or higher level governmental representatives. To be sure, such skills figure prominently across all of the World Bank’s areas of operation. Many World Bank higher level staff consult with authorities on a regular basis. The respondent remained unsure, however, whether such skills could be taught at university.

In a more general manner, a few respondents referred to the lack of an international, and more specifically, a **developmental perspective** during their education. Thus, their work on such issues depended largely on self-initiative. For working at the World Bank, the respondents maintain that knowledge on developing countries and their development context is key; if not in-depth coverage, then at least some coverage would have been very useful. Further, one respondent suggested that it would have been beneficial to acquire **substantive knowledge on international organizations** (e.g. the World Bank, UN) during higher education. Acquiring early knowledge on the various international organizations active, e.g. in international development, was rated as particularly valuable for the outset of one’s educational career and/or in the early stages of professional development.

While a discussion of the respondents’ views on the German education system is offered in section 4.6, the following list briefly identifies some suggested weaknesses and disadvantages of deriving from the German education system when linked to usefulness and job-preparedness: (1) lack of international outlook, (2) focus on theory rather than practicability, (3) curricula with emphasis on outdated, rather than cutting-edge topics, (4) lack of cross-country comparative topics, (5) lack of development perspective, (6) lack of empirical training.

Summarizing the respondents’ evaluations of the specific knowledge and skills gained throughout their education, we conclude that respondents’ ratings of their education were largely positive, though not all were. Useful knowledge and skills include a good theoretical background, critical thinking and analytical skills, quantitative skills, intercultural and communication skills, exposure to leading professionals and cutting-edge topics, as well as writing skills. Positive evaluations apply in particular to respondents’ views on their Anglo-Saxon education; which will be discussed further in section 4.2.3.

#### 4.2.2 Fields of Study

While some respondents have straightforward educational backgrounds with a focus on one field only (e.g. Economics or Legal Studies), most of their vitae include studies of more than one discipline. Often, the respondents’ education was cross-disciplinary in nature, combining, for instance, the study of economics with development studies. Table 4 below lists the fields of studies among the respondents, ranging from undergraduate to post-graduate education. Economics is the most

frequent field of study; among all respondents, twelve studied Economics at least as a minor (12), followed by Political Science and/or Development (8), Information Systems and Management (4), Business Administration (4), Public Policy or Public Administration (3), Legal Studies (2), Education (2), Engineering or Computer Science (2), and others (4).

Table 4: Respondents' Major and Minor Fields of Study

University Education – covering major and minor fields	N
Economics	12
Political Science / Development	8
Information Systems / Information Management	4
Business Administration	4
Public Policy / Public Administration	3
Legal Studies	2
Education	2
Engineering / Computer Science	2
Other	4

The variety of different fields among the respondents' educational backgrounds may be a reflection of the breadth and multitude of developmental aspects that the World Bank pursues. What stands out here is the frequency of economic studies across the respondents' educational backgrounds. This underlines a commonly held view that for higher level positions in the World Bank, especially within the respective development networks, an educational background in economics is considered indispensable. This may come as no surprise given the World Bank's institutional profile as an international financial institution, aside from its development and knowledge functions. While many job descriptions for network positions require an economics background, others may not specifically refer to one; yet, they appear to implicitly require proficiency in economic issues or a basic understanding of economic principles. Due to the consistent application of economics across all sectors of development, many respondents viewed at least some basic knowledge of economics as helpful, while several respondents attributed particular relevance to a macroeconomic education for a career within the World Bank, as the following comment shows:

*"But of course, my master and my Ph.D. were in international macroeconomics. So I was familiar with the topic the World Bank deals with. I was familiar with [...] the monetary policy, exchange rate policy because all my research was on that. So it really gave me a good theoretical background. So when I came here I was familiar with all these issues in the theoretical point of view. And that is very important. So this helped me."*

Aside from the topical relevance of economics for the majority of the World Bank's operations, respondents identified specific skills associated with the study of Economics. These include, for instance, mental flexibility and adaptability. The following comment underscores this view:

*"For me it [a background in economics] is a plus. It does give people the ability to think through issues in a disciplined manner, across a range of sectors. [...] The level of demand in a particular unit for a certain expertise is unlikely to be very high over a consistent period of time. And majoring in economics gives you the flexibility and the adaptability to respond to demands that are likely to change."*

While the comment above relates to the importance of flexibility and adaptability in a fluctuating environment like the World Bank, where areas of priority may change rather rapidly, it is important to stress that the World Bank has expanded its areas of operations over time. That is, it has become broader in its development approach by including, inter alia, more socially-oriented programming. To properly staff new developmental areas, the World Bank increasingly hires people from outside its traditional hiring themes, which included, for instance, economists, engineers, and urban planners. Accordingly, the educational profiles of World Bank staff are becoming more diverse and include, for instance, education specialists and anthropologists, to name only a few. Thus, economics may still be important but need not be the major focus in one's education. Some respondents, for instance, gained economic knowledge through interdisciplinary course work, which they thought was beneficial in light of their current work at the World Bank:

*"I studied [...] the core subjects in international education. I had an emphasis on international economics and law, which was useful. I would not want to highlight any particular credit outside the economics, which was of a particular benefit, because it was presented as a whole, designed as an entity and you took part in the entity. [...] I was satisfied to be with it and to participate in it."*

*"[An education in] public policy with a cross-disciplinary focus meant that you didn't become an economist but you certainly became literate in economic issues and you know well enough anthropology and sociology to be able to work in a number of different areas and appreciate different perspectives."*

A few respondents have no formal education in economics. Instead, they possess technical expertise and sector specialization relevant to the World Bank's operational areas. These include, for instance, knowledge management and education. Hence, while some respondents identified a background in economics as very important, an educational background in Economics appears not to be sine qua non for working at the World Bank. Given the dynamic nature of the World Bank's business, the demand for skills may vary, however. When asked about which fields of study would increase the likelihood of getting hired, one respondent associated fluctuating demands with changing recruitment priorities:

*"That's a very difficult question because our business has been changing. It is a dynamic process. Years ago when Wolfensohn was in his second term he pushed very hard for the World Bank to work on a set of very important social issues, like education, health, social protection -- issues which became very important for the institution. Mostly, social issues and safe-guard. Those issues are important to our institution, they will always be. But there is a shift in priority to infrastructure. A couple of years ago infrastructure used to be very active, then we shifted more to social issues and now infrastructure is coming back because we realize that is very important for the World Bank to come back to this area. So it's hard when the Bank's business keeps changing, which then has a direct impact on recruitment. Some time ago we were trying to reduce our portfolio in infrastructure, we didn't need that many engineers. But with all the infrastructure coming back, we need*

*more engineers now. [...] So it is always a dynamic process. But even though there will always be a shifting back and forth between priorities, there are certain areas where we will always be needing people, like management, polity, public sector management, infrastructure. We will always need people there, no matter how many. We need environmental people. There are so many areas."*

Summarizing the respondent's statistics and evaluations with respect to relevant fields of study, we see that the study of Economics in general is useful for pursuing a career within the World Bank. There is some variation among the respondents' answers, however, concerning the depth of economic studies. While some suggest that a graduate degree in Economics is important, others argue that interdisciplinary studies addressing economic principles and issues suffice. A few, then, suggest that specialists in areas other than economics are increasingly needed to perform the jobs of the World Bank's expanding, yet fluctuating, development portfolio. All things equal, we conclude that a sound understanding of economics is key for a World Bank career - the more knowledge about it, the better, as the following comment suggests:

*"It needs to be there. Doesn't have to be a major but at least be there. Could be focused on political science but I think that economics is important. At some point you should have studied it, at least some exposure to economics."*

#### **4.2.3 Levels of Education and Educational Traditions**

Beyond knowledge on economic issues and/or other development related fields, what matters is specialization in an area relevant to the World Bank's operations. Although specialization is largely associated with professional experience, technical knowledge in particular is often deeply grounded in education. What was important to several respondents was early specialization in fields of relevance for the World Bank, as the following comment shows:

*"I think as a candidate there are two main streams that either you want to know international affairs or international economics and you find your specialty in that. Or you go more in the technical or even more soft skills in terms of communications, information and knowledge management, IT, but always with the aim of a very specific expertise"*

It would be reasonable to assume that as the level of education increases, the degree of specialization increases also. The sample distribution of respondents' university degrees reflects the World Bank's emphasis on strong educational backgrounds and technical skills among its higher level staff: Out of the 26 respondents, ten hold Ph.D.s, 15 have Master's degrees and one has a Bachelor's degree.<sup>33</sup> Among the respondents with a Master's degree, many have more than one graduate degree, often in related, yet more specialized areas. For higher level network positions in the World Bank, a Master's degree is the minimum educational requirement. This requirement is relaxed for some higher level non-network positions. There, a Bachelor's degree might suffice if coupled with extensive work experience and relevant technical certificates. Of the 12 people holding non-network positions in the sample, only one is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program, nine hold at

<sup>33</sup> Two respondents have postgraduate degrees in addition to their Master's degree. The staff with a Bachelor's degree holds a non-network positions and has additional years of postgraduate schooling, with a focus on technical skills.

least one Master's, and one has a Bachelor's degrees and technical certificates. For higher level network positions, thus, there appears to be a slight bias towards Ph.D.s. Compared to the non-network sub-sample, where 8,3 percent of the respondents hold a Ph.D., 56 percent of network staff have obtained a Ph.D.

Several respondents directly addressed skills and qualities that relate specifically to Ph.D.s. These include discipline, analytical skills, writing skills, and "a scientific mind." To some, a Ph.D. demonstrates the ability to do quality research and publish work, which are considered important qualities given the World Bank's emphasis on generating and disseminating its own research to client countries as well as the development community. Again, the World Bank's function as a knowledge bank comes through here, where research and writing skills are central. Through a comparative lens, one respondent refers to such skills and qualities as giving an "extra-edge" to candidates with a Ph.D. when compared to people with Master's degrees, as they are able to pursue quality research and thus go beyond the World Bank's day-to-day operational business.

Other respondents directly associate the Ph.D. with a comparative advantage in the recruitment process and claim that it is useful for entry. The following comments exemplify both the above mentioned qualities and skills associated with Ph.D.s and the suggested comparative advantage for recruitment:

*"A Ph.D. in whatever it is [is helpful in being recruited], because there is something, maybe you know this yourself, the person who has stopped at the Master's stage has not jumped over all the barrel. There is something about the persons, who select themselves to going all the way, getting the analytical skills, writing the dissertation. It is just a sign of discipline and a structured mind. Somebody who can actually jump over barrel after barrel after barrel and get to the end of the education system. That is number one, a Ph.D. that does not mean that there are not good Master's people in the world. There are, but they cannot have that extra edge that is needed.*

*"Going through a Ph. D. program is more about the discipline you get in order to narrow questions down to identify essential elements and be much more analytical in your approach and be very honest and open with your research and not be tied down by a fad or opinion but really pursue things with an open mind in a scientific way and very thorough."*

*"I think I was hired because I have all the degrees that you have to have. A Ph.D. is very well liked here."*

*"A Ph.D. is certainly useful for entry"*

Aside from the comparative advantage that job candidates with a Ph.D. might have in higher level staff recruitment, some respondents also addressed the importance of a Ph.D. with respect to promotions within the World Bank. Several respondents suggest that a Ph.D. is helpful in moving up the career ladder, while two respondents suggest that it is necessary. Another respondent states that people with Ph.D.s have a competitive advantage when applying for management positions simply because they bring research and publications to the job. The following comments refer to the positive relationship between a Ph.D. and the probability of being promoted or "moving upwards" within the World Bank:

*"I think it [Ph.D.] will help me a lot here in terms of making a career"*

*"In the mid term, if you want to apply for managerial position I probably think that it [Ph.D.] is also useful again when you present yourself."*

*"I do have lot of operation experience, but for management positions that is not enough. Because here at the World Bank the analytical work is very important. So there is something probably missing, that will keep me. I could probably move up one more. But I wonder if I could be a manager, because inside the bank it is very important to have publications and it helps to have a Ph.D."*

*"Without a Ph.D. you can get in as a consultant. But if you don't have a Ph.D. I do not think you can move upwards." [...] Right now to get in the Bank, you need to have a PhD if you want to make a career."*

While many respondents would argue that a Ph.D. is advantageous in the recruitment and promotion context, others maintain that a strong and relevant professional background can trump education. According to several respondents, the longer one's professional record is, the less important his or her educational background is. This applies primarily to the hiring of mid-career professionals, with a minimum requirement of a Master's degree and eight years of relevant experience. At some point, as one respondent says, "it matters how special you are to the institution", irrespective of whether the person holds a Master's or Ph.D. Given the high proportion of higher level staff with Master's degrees, it seems reasonable to suggest that extensive relevant work experience could also "replace" a Ph.D., as the following comment illustrates:

*"Also a lot of developing country experience could replace a Ph.D. It is not necessary that everyone has a Ph.D., but if you have a lot of relevant developing country experience a Ph.D. is not necessarily needed. There are a lot of people that have a Masters degree."*

Holding levels of education constant, the sample also contains a bias towards an Anglo-Saxon educational background. Nearly 70 percent of the respondents holding a graduate degree earned at least one degree at a university in the United States or the United Kingdom. As mentioned in section 4.2.1., almost all respondents with an Anglo-Saxon education claim that their education provided them with useful skills and qualifications. Such good preparation appears to inform the World Bank's recruitment processes also. In fact, the World Bank appears to exhibit an institutional bias towards Anglo-Saxon education, which some respondents identify when speaking about recruitment decisions. In their view, an Anglo-Saxon degree has pull in the recruitment decision, as the following comments show:

*"In terms of education, what we see is that people who have a very high level of education are usually from some sort of top schools. Unfortunately, many of these schools are not in Europe, but in the US or in Great Britain. There are a lot of people from Harvard, from Berkeley, from Princeton."*

*"So they [applicants] might not be US citizens but they have studied in the US. They have this academic background that we are attracted to. They come from a multicultural environment and they had some exposure and their thesis, their work is focused, because they have a certain degree of advice from their professors. [...] In a certain way that can only give more chances to the students, more exposure to what they are trying to do."*



Finally, and in conjunction with addressing the usefulness of an Anglo-Saxon education, several respondents stated that prestigious universities, especially U.S. Ivy League and reputable British universities, facilitated their entry into the World Bank as the following comments show:

*"Harvard was very important. A colleague of mine told me that there are more than 70 different nationalities working for the Bank, but they all come from ten different graduate schools."*

*"Purely the fact that I was at Oxford helped."*

Respondents' statements indicating recruitment preferences for graduates from Anglo-Saxon universities in general and prestigious universities in particular were backed by statements from Human Resource staff who suggested that staff were often recruited from U.S. Ivy League or British schools. While explanations for this bias may be ample, one respondent pointed to traditional networking between certain schools and the World Bank.

*"It is a combination of the fact that some schools also have traditional networking in the Bank. Some of the professors can be former Bank staff or current Bank consultants so you cannot really avoid a network in this respect."*

In spite of the World Bank's suggested tendency to hire from specific Anglo-Saxon universities, there appears to be willingness to diversify along this dimension. That is, to increase staff coming from other educational traditions.<sup>34</sup> A shared rationale among several respondents points at diversity as an important objective to recruit across a variety of schools.

*"We do try to avoid recruiting only from certain universities, because we know that this is not healthy for the organization. And we are doing better than we used to, because at least we are aware of it. But it is not easy, because sometimes we find the best people in the best schools. But we try to give space to schools, which have more recent Master's in Development, Economics, or other issues that are relevant for us. So we try to diversify this and not to recruit only from certain US schools or the London School of Economics."*

*"When we recruit people they very often come from certain schools that are in the top positions in the different rankings, but we do try to diversify through outreach activities. [...] We do not have any objectives that we recruit anybody from Yale or Columbia. That is not our goal. It is not easy, because at the senior level, decision makers in an organization, maybe they do not come from a diverse background, so we try to push for a diverse academic background, but the top is not as diverse as we would like."*

Summarizing the respondents' views on levels and types of education we draw several conclusions: First, we find that specialization and strong academic credentials are key qualifications for a career at the World Bank. Second, we find that while a Ph.D. is not a formal requirement for a World Bank career, the level of education seems to matter in the recruitment as well as the promotion process: Holding other factors constant, a Ph.D. appears to give candidates and higher level staff a com-

<sup>34</sup> The World Bank recently created an internal Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion to address this issue, among many others.

parative advantage in the recruitment and promotion processes, respectively. Third, we find that an Anglo-Saxon education is also beneficial, as it provides important skills identified in section 4.2.1. or simply because of linguistic advantages, as the World Bank's working language is English. Finally, we find that, within the Anglo-Saxon education tradition, the World Bank has a tendency to recruit its staff from certain U.S. and British universities. Such suggested preferences might derive, for instance, from active networking ties between the World Bank and these universities or merely reflect the high quality of the universities' graduates.

### 4.3 Professional Experience Prior to Joining the World Bank

One very important qualification for employment at the World Bank is professional work experience. Hence, it comes as no surprise that all respondents had held jobs before joining the World Bank. The following table offers an overview of the sectors in which the respondents had gathered their previous professional work experience.

Table 5: Respondents' Work Experiences Across Sectors

Work Experience Across Sectors	Interviewees
<b>Public Sector</b>	17
(e.g. multilateral international agencies, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, government, public foundations, public administration)	
<b>Private sector</b>	13
(e.g. private companies, organizations, agencies, foundations, private consulting firms)	
<b>Academia</b>	8
(e.g. universities, research centers)	

As Table 4 indicates, the World Bank draws its employees from academia as well as the private and public sectors. Many of the respondents have a mixed professional background. Many respondents possess both private and public sector experience. Others were directly hired from private sector jobs and some came straight out of other international organizations or academia.

When asked to evaluate their previous work experience, all respondents said that it contributed to their professional development in a positive way. Previous international work experience was viewed as particularly relevant for entering the World Bank and for their performance at their current job. Particular emphasis was placed on prior exposure to a development context. According to some respondents, such work experience helped them accumulate relevant knowledge and skills, which gave them a competitive edge over competitors in their respective hiring processes. The following comments underscore the usefulness of work experience on the international level, or more specifically, in a development context:

*I think it [work experience with UNCTAD and GATT] was very valuable, because of the areas in which I worked for certain development areas, in which I work at the Bank still; these are trade*

*issues that are linked to the interests of developing countries. It also gave me experiences in working for a relatively large organization. And during the time I was there both institutions were giving quite a bit of responsibilities to young staff that built self-confidence.*

*"I am not sure whether the job at UN really helped but it was good to demonstrate work experience in a developing country on social issues."*

*"I had an experience at the IMF. Given the close relationship between the IMF and the World Bank in the African Region or, in general, working in developing countries, it is a highly valuable asset to have somebody who knows how the IMF works precisely and therefore seems to be up to the standards of an economist and secondly the knowledge of the institutional side, which is definitely an asset."*

Aside from working for other international organizations and/or in a development context, respondents referred to the Young Professionals (YP) Program as a good way to start a career within the World Bank. Among the permanent higher level staff in the sample, six entered the World Bank as Young Professionals. The program's objective is to hire and integrate outstanding professionals with leadership potential to become future leaders of the institution. Evidence of the program's success is ample: In 2005, for instance, 16 out of 26 Vice-Presidents were former YPs.<sup>35</sup> The following comment of a former YP underscores the function of the YP program as a vehicle for career development in the World Bank:

*"I think that what they say about YPs is that you are sort of viewed as somebody who is supposed to make a career."*

The Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Program is another avenue that may lead to a career in the World Bank. A respondent who has hired several JPOs in his career so far suggests it serves as a "great way" to get into the World Bank initially, thus, increases the likelihood of re-entry as higher level staff at later stages, as the following comment suggests:

*"I know the German government has this JPO program. And I think that's a great way to come when you finish your M.A. and then go back to get your Ph.D. or go out in the field to get some experience and then come back. The application process is pretty straight forward."*

For one former JPO among the respondents, the JPO program led directly to a permanent position at the World Bank. To the respondent, the JPO working opportunity was useful as it helped acquire necessary work experience and get exposure to the World Bank. Besides, it was considered valuable because it allowed the respondent to develop a profile and acquire a reputation. The following comment documents the opportunities that might arise by entering the JPO program:

*"The JPO program basically allowed me to get in the operational part of the Bank, which would have been difficult without it. So that was a big step for me, and then it was very clear that they would put me on the path for task manager and that is what happened. [...] I guess it is a matter of using your JPO time to establish yourself, so that people rely on you and need you in their work program and take on as many responsibilities as you can. So by the time the hiring comes up you*

<sup>35</sup> In addition: 25 out of 45 Directors were former YPs and 14 out of 32 Sector Directors were former YPs.

*are really doing all the work, you have been demonstrating for two years that you can do it, making yourself indispensable."*

World Bank consultancies are also viewed as a good way to get onto a World Bank career path. Five of the respondents were short-term consultants before being hired as higher level staff. They all agreed that this experience was an important step towards a permanent position. They viewed consultancies as first-rate opportunities to get into the institution, get established in a certain field, and start developing a reputation that others know you for. The following comments exemplify the respondents' views:

*"When I finished my master's degree I worked here for a year as a consultant. So I knew about the Bank and about the Young Professionals program. And I think that helps a lot if people are interested in joining the World Bank."*

*"And all during this time, the whole time I was at the University of Oregon, I was working as a consultant for the World Bank. So I was constantly doing projects and activities for the Bank and traveling. And the reason somebody gave me, the reason why I got this call for a one-year job, was because that person had read something that I had produced for Uganda."*

*"So I got a consultancy and I had to write a paper. People read the paper, I was asked to write another paper. And then things went well and I was in. Actually, there was a lot of demand for my work and I started working with many different people. So I got lots of exposure. Then this position that I have now was open and I applied. You have to go through a completely new process. You have to do interviews with a panel, etc. But you have an advantage if you are already inside, because then the information comes from the inside whether you are good or not."*

Finally, we asked respondents about whether they had done internships or volunteer work; and if so, whether they considered them relevant for either starting a career at the World Bank or, more generally, pursuing a career in international development. Within the sample, several respondents had done internships with other international organizations like, for instance, the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, or the International Monetary Fund. Four respondents had done developmental volunteer work, either on the national (e.g. university or church groups) or international level (e.g. Peace Corps). Most respondents did their internships/volunteer work during their studies, while a few others gained their first experience after graduating with a Master's degree. All respondents said that internships and/or volunteer work was very valuable, as they allowed application of personal interests and/or theory in a practical context. To former volunteers and interns of organizations in developing countries, their work was important because it allowed them to gain initial hands-on experience, acquire valuable skills (e.g. intercultural skills, communication skills), and get a better feel for what was happening on the ground. Such exposure was not only considered as broadening the respondents' horizons and skill repertoire from early on, but also as shaping the respondents' career choices towards development. Some, though not all, former interns or volunteers identified contacts as a helpful product of internships. One respondent was a former World Bank intern. Contacts made while at the World Bank were considered very helpful for entering the World Bank as a higher level professional at later stages. The following comments highlight the usefulness and relevance of internships:

*"They [internships] were very relevant. Very much so. It was working in the field. Especially the Peace Corps was an opportunity to live in a small village and see how people perceived their own issues, how they analyzed them, how they saw development programs impact them. It is a special opportunity to get a lens on what development looks like for the people you are trying to help. And get a feel for what it's like to live on one dollar a day and go through the dramas that people go through in their daily lives. So I think that experience carried me as much as my education did."*

*"My internship at the European Central Bank was important because it was part of a family of institutions. When I applied to work here, I started as a consultant. And the fact that I had done some work at the European Central Bank, I had written papers there. It gave the World Bank some kind of idea of me. And I think these kinds of institutions, it is important to get in one of them. And then it is easier to move around. Because there is this same culture in international organizations."*

*"They [internships] were crucial, I think, they were almost decisive. Not necessarily in terms of the contacts that you get, but of course it's good to get contacts. But also in terms of understanding for myself where I really wanted to go next after my Ph.D."*

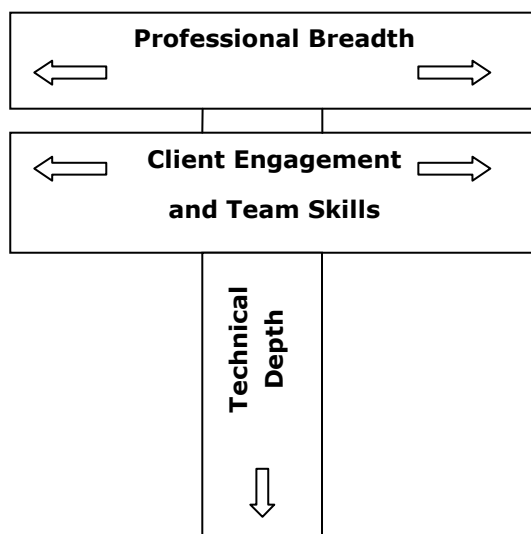
Summarizing the respondents' evaluation of their own professional background as well as the importance of work experience for a career at the World Bank, we conclude that relevant practical work experience, preferably in a development context, enables the development and strengthening of key skills that are necessary for work at the World Bank. For recent graduate, respondents listed several useful avenues that provide an opportunity to acquire hands-on work experience. These include, for instance, internships with relevant players in the development context, World Bank short-term consultancies, the World Bank's Junior Professional Officer (JPO) program, as well as the World Bank's Young Professionals (YP) Program.

#### **4.4 Necessary Skills and Qualifications for a World Bank Career**

An important aspect of the PROFIO project is to acquire a comprehensive picture of what skills and qualifications are necessary for a career at the World Bank. Here, we asked the interviewees about the "perfect profile" of a candidate (in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes) who is looking for employment with the World Bank. We assume that the respondents' professional experience at the World Bank and other institutions informs their answers. Hence, the following comments should be viewed as subjective evaluations in light of their professional experience, rather than an "objective picture" of what skills and qualification are needed to excel professionally at the World Bank.

Since necessary qualifications vary from job to job, respondents primarily identified baseline skills and qualifications rated as important for any post at the World Bank. The section below identifies such skills and qualifications. While they will be discussed individually, it is important to note that all respondents emphasized that the right combination of skills matters. That is a strong repertoire of skills that derive from educational, professional, and behavioral qualities. As one respondent states: "What matters is the depth of technical experience and the breath of experience, the ability to work across boundaries, to collaborate with people from their own profession and people from other professions or across sectors or across countries or across disciplines that go beyond operations. To successfully manage a project they have to have that knowledge." The following drawing illustrates the directional effects of skills within one's portfolio, while highlighting the World Bank's approach to recruitment as they enable participants to work successfully at the World Bank:

Figure 7: Qualifications and Competencies - Integrator Profile



When asked to identify individual skills and competencies, all interviewees said that **strong technical skills** are indispensable. Depending on the experience and age of the employee, the importance of the technical aspect in one's portfolio may vary. However, most respondents highlighted that the World Bank searches for people with extensive experience and very strong technical backgrounds that can be applied in the respective sectors. This applies in particular to mid-career senior professionals, but, with some limitations, to professionals also. Related to technical skills is the respondent's emphasis on **strong sectoral knowledge**. Sectoral knowledge not only includes technical skills with respect to one particular job, but it refers mainly to a broader knowledge that covers other sector jobs as well, as the following comment highlights:

*"If I look at a technical professional whom I hire then what matters is the sectoral knowledge within that area. For instance if I am hiring someone for water and I need someone that has this sectoral knowledge not just a water education. The sectoral knowledge whether they had worked for rural water development or urban water development or whether they have done sanitations. I am looking for that, you need to have that sectoral expertise."*

In addition, **strong academic credentials** are also suggested as a necessary qualification for the World Bank. However, the significance of academic credentials seems to vary by rank. As some respondents indicate, the emphasis on academic credentials is inversely related to work experience. That is, the shorter the actual work exposure the greater the relevance of a person's academic credentials, as was mentioned earlier. What remains a consistently highly valued skill set throughout are **analytical skills**, which World Bank staff appears to be expected to have.

Of particular importance to respondents were behavioral skills that expressed **tolerance, empathy, and respect for other cultures**. Tolerance, coupled with respect for other cultures, was identified by some as very important for working across cultures within the World Bank's multi-cultural environment.

*"My own belief is that it is very important for an organization like the World Bank; that is, the single most important characteristic in behavioral terms or in soft behavioral terms is tolerance, which is really the basis for diversity. Which means it is important to accept people with edges, all of us have edges."*

Building on respect and empathy is **client engagement competency**, which is the basis for effective communication with representatives from client countries. Beyond respect for the World Bank's clients, client engagement is conceptually intertwined with **communication skills**. For instance, client engagement is based on the ability to adjust one's language to a different audience as well as the capability to negotiate. Through client engagement, the World Bank is able to identify issues of concern for developing countries and design its country assistance programs accordingly. To some respondents, such skills are indispensable for advancing the World Bank's objectives and operations worldwide. The following comments underline the client focus of the World Bank, and simultaneously, the value of client engagement skills:

*"The other behavioral thing is somebody who really has the capability of respecting clients who are much poorer and have come from more difficult circumstances than any of us can imagine. I have seen people with the other characteristics, who do not have the respectfulness of another human being. They are not any use here."*

*"Often we find that people who are highly educated become arrogant. And the World Bank is not a place to be arrogant vis-à-vis borrowers. We know better. That's very bad. We need to listen to borrowers because they know what the real issues are."*

*"It is how to deal with authorities. We have meetings with the ministers. It is communication skills that you need and that are required for this kind of dialogue. You have to learn, you have a meeting with the minister today, it goes well and think what was good, and what was not good. And then next time you try to improve. How can I reach the government? It is very important in our position to have the trust of the government. They need to trust us, they need to trust the institution."*

*"When you are talking about a project you end up talking to technical people who are as competent as you are, but also to people who know very little but they play a major role in the decision. And so you talk to the people that you care for, I should have mentioned them before anybody else, the people, they need schools. You need to talk to the mothers and the children. So we need people who are able to adjust their language."*

Subsumed under client engagement competency and/or communication skills, respondents identified specific aspects of both skill sets. Some respondents discuss the value of **listening skills**, as much of the work of World Bank staff involves the identification of developmental concerns in cooperation with the clients. Further, **clear messaging skills** were deemed important by another respondent to prevent potential linguistic problems with the interlocutor. **Language skills** appear to be a sine qua non, as many respondents seemed to suggest, both for client relations and within the World Bank. Though it goes without saying, strong language skills, particularly in English, are considered very important, as they help people to express themselves, develop arguments, and make a case for a research project, for instance. Among the respondents, the modal number of

languages spoken is four.<sup>36</sup> English is viewed as indispensable by every respondent. Some respondents consider additional World Bank languages (e.g., Spanish and French) as necessary, while others suggested that they represented very valuable assets. **Strong writing skills** were also identified by some as a crucial set of skills. To paraphrase one respondent: The ability to write in English, the World Bank's lingua franca, affects the quality of communication among multi-lingual World Bank staff as well as the World Bank's relations with clients, whose first language often is not English. The following comments are selected remarks that stress the importance of effective and efficient communication across the above mentioned dimensions:

*"You need to be an effective and efficient communicator. Most of the time you have to listen. You are listening to the development officials. You are listening to the external media, you are listening to your clients, and you are constantly listening all the time. So should be an effective listener, within the area of communication."*

*"Always assume that people do not understand and be very clear in communicating to them and repeating things, because it is a very diverse institution."*

*"English is very important. But English is not all of it. If you really want to be successful, you need a second language, a second pillar. That depends on where you are, what area you come from. It can be Spanish, can be French as a classic, it can be Portuguese or whatever. Normally it is at least English and Spanish."*

*"And I think one fundamental problem that we have, I think I have always been aware of, is that many, many graduates in the Western universities cannot write well. And you very often write in a language that is second language or even a foreign language to governments, poor English, or very often very unstructured English to talk about very complex issues. Communication is fundamental."*

Related to communication skills are **teamwork skills**. All respondents referred to the importance of teamwork in such a large organization like the World Bank, which operates in a matrix environment that may bring people together on region-specific as well as sector-specific projects. Due to the heavy overlap among networks, teams can change often, and thus require frequent team formation processes across issues and regions. Knowing how to form a team, work in teams, and foster team spirit was frequently mentioned as a very important skills set. For successful team work, **flexibility** and **consensus-building** are identified as important qualifications by some respondents. Outside of team work, flexibility was also considered crucial when dealing with the World Bank's clients in contexts where projects and/or cooperation might not go as planned. Also, a few respondents rated **leadership skills** and **initiative** as highly valuable to get started and further advance ideas and project work. Finally, a **sense of competitiveness** is necessary to succeed at the World Bank. As one respondent states, employees need to advance and manage their own career in a setting that is abound of highly motivated and qualified people, with the objective of producing high quality work and moving up the career ladder. The following comments illustrate the necessity of the above mentioned skills:

*"Flexibility is important, very important. Teamwork, being able to work with people from different backgrounds. Always assume that people do not understand and be very clear in communicating to them and repeating things, because it is a very diverse institution and you have people coming to*

<sup>36</sup> All respondents were asked to list their foreign languages, spoken, at minimum, at a conversational level.



*the same task with very different expectations and standards and you have to be able to crash your own standards and work it out with people.”*

*“It is very hard to build consensus here, so you have to be able get things done and build consensus and have everybody feel like they got what they wanted. You need to do that here, no matter where you are.”*

*“I would say if you want to succeed in IOs particularly if you go to the IMF or the World Bank or even United Nations, I think you have to be very competitive in your behavior.”*

Summarizing the respondents’ views on necessary skills and qualifications for a strong job performance, we conclude that the World Bank requires a broad range of skills and qualifications that, while important individually, should be part of each candidate’s portfolio.

#### **4.5 Recruitment Procedures**

One important objectives of the PROFIO study at the World Bank was to gather relevant information on its recruitment process, which particular emphasis on the selection procedures. We were interested in how recruitment processes are organized and what evaluation criteria are employed to choose the most suitable candidates. Further, we wanted to know more about employees’ general opinions about the recruitment procedures. In section 2.3 we described the steps inherent in recruitment and promotion processes as prescribed by the World Bank’s human resource management policies. However, as most of the interview partners were either in the position of hiring managers or staff members involved in recruiting personnel, we were able to obtain deeper insight into the selection process in general and gather more detailed information on the evaluation criteria for selecting candidates in particular. Also, interviewees evaluated their own hiring process. Thus, this section offers a more “subjective” perspective on how recruitment is implemented at the World Bank, rather than an “objective” recapitulation of the recruitment policy guidelines.

All higher level staff evaluated their own recruitment processes as “standard,” “normal,” and “transparent;” as they followed the proposed recruitment steps outline by the human resource guidelines. Of all the respondents, six entered the World Bank through the Young Professionals (YP) program; and, if asked, referred to the standard and highly competitive multi-stage recruitment process. According to one respondent, the process included a two-stage application process followed by an intensive interviewing process and leading to the final decisions, which were based on several aspects, e.g., professional aspects and diversity concerns, as the following comment shows:

*“I applied through the YP program, which is a standard application process. I had to fill out an initial application form, I think there was an essay about certain things on the Bank. Ones you do that, some people get a full application. And ones you got through that, then some people are selected for the interview process, which was about one hundred at the time. And then you go through a very intensive interviewing process. There are panels and now they have this behavioral assessment as well. And then it goes down to about fifty and in the end the final decision is made on twenty-five at that point, including various considerations beyond professional aspects to include, for instance diversity.”*

Similarly, respondents who were recruited as mid-career professionals described their recruitment processes as “competitive.” It followed “normal” procedures, starting from the application process, via interviews of short-listed candidates, to the actual job offers. The following comments refer to and evaluate some of the major recruitment steps:

*“The process goes normally. It is in the context of a competitive process. [...] There must have been at least five candidates and that is how it goes. Usually at the end of the day there is some kind of a short-list with five candidates [...] And in fact I do not know about my competitors, I have no idea. But as an outcome I got the offer.”*

*“I had initially applied for a position at the World Bank’s Chennai office in India, which was advertised in the major newspapers. I believe there were around 6000 applicants for 10 positions. They had a first round of interviews by the HR officer and that was held all across the country in the major cities. After they short-listed a smaller number of people, maybe a couple of hundred or so and at that time they came to Washington, D.C., which included a Senior Manager who flew to India to interview these remaining candidates. And then I guess after a couple of months they made the final offers.”*

Unlike recruitment evaluations for higher level staff positions, consultancies appear to follow less formal and less transparent recruitment mechanisms. Such inferences are drawn on the basis of respondents’ answers who either held World Bank consultancies prior to joining the institution’s higher level staff or who are currently contracted. In the sample, eight of the higher level staff are former consultants, and three provide consulting services at the moment. Most former as well as current World Bank consultants claim that their application process was rather informal. That is, they were encouraged to apply for contract openings through World Bank staff or proactively sought out persons with knowledge of and/or experience with the institution’s operations and research activities. Such contacts either included World Bank employees or (former) World Bank consultants. What is noteworthy here is that for several respondents’ ties with professors at U.S. universities or active alumni networks appeared to be key in acquiring knowledge of and contacts within the World Bank. If that was the case, respondents stressed the usefulness of networking for getting hired. One respondent states that a fellow alumnus helped her get the position. The following comments underscore the value of networking for obtaining a consultancy contract:

*“He [a professor at Harvard] had been working for the Bank before, and I told him that I was interested in the Bank. So he gave me a list of colleagues he used to work with whom he knew were working on corruption issues in the Bank and basically sent them a letter of recommendation. And then I flew to Washington to meet all these people. That was in 2000. They said it was really hard, there is a budget crunch and we do not really have anything, but we will let you know if we learn of something. That is how it happened. Someone talked to someone, who needed someone and that person actually called me.”*

*“My application process was quite informal. I was basically looking for short-term consultancies. I heard about this program, so I contacted someone who was working in that unit, who was actually an alumni from SAIS.”*

*“Sometimes, getting a short-term consultancy is very informal, especially for young people. For older ones, they are specialists, they have a lot of publications. People would know about them and would contact them. For young people it is more knowing the project one works on and then just trying to contact someone and ask him whether they need someone to help.”*

*"As I learned when I arrived, is that recruiting people for consultancies is more in terms of whom you know and if you are part of an alumni network of any of the universities that work here. That is the way people usually come in. People, for example, from SAIS, John Hopkins Schools of International Studies, they have a lot of elements here, so considering the proximity of the university, many graduates tend to dig into this network and start working here."*

One reason why there appear to be systematic differences between the recruitment procedures of higher level staff as opposed to short-term consultants lies in the distinct natures of the two types of job opportunities. Through short-term consultancies the World Bank outsources demand for knowledge, assistance and consulting on specific, and mostly termed, projects. The amount of outsourcing is typically determined by budgetary constraints, as one respondent suggests. But it also might involve advisory services that the World Bank cannot provide through its staff. According to another respondent, such specialized demands are typically assigned to reputable and highly experienced professionals. Hence, short-term demand primarily drives the recruitment of short-term consultants. Higher level staff, on the other hand, requires a different level of commitment. What matters here, according to several respondents, is potential for development and success within the institution, in conjunction with the required expertise, skills, and qualifications.

Apart from evaluations of recruitment experiences, we are also interested in criteria that influence the standard recruitment procedures of higher level staff. When asked what criteria influence the recruitment process, some respondents identify the World Bank's commitment to **diversity** as influential. Diversity applies to a number of dimensions, including nationalities, gender, ethnicity, and professional background. While respondents stated that there was no official quota system, hiring decisions are informed by the World Bank's effort to achieve a more balanced representation across nationality and gender dimensions, in particular. For instance, the World Bank's focus on increasing the representation of its "Nationalities of Concern" is frequently mentioned as influencing the decision-process. "Nationalities of Concern" either represent countries whose donations are disproportionate to their level of representation among higher level World Bank staff (e.g., Germany and Japan) or borrowing countries that are severely underrepresented (e.g., Sub-Saharan African or Caribbean states). According to some respondents, diversity criteria primarily drive labor market search strategies. Such strategies are designed to identify candidates who both fill an existing diversity gap and possess the right qualifications to excel professionally. However, diversity concerns appear to be less relevant in the final decision-making process. As some respondents point out: While diversity may be helpful, what ultimately matters are qualifications and skills. Such logic presents a dilemma, especially in the World Bank, where there appears to be a bias towards Anglo-Saxon staff, as one respondent points out. Similarly, one respondent suggests that **political criteria** do not matter in the World Bank's standard and competitive recruitment procedures for higher level staff. In this view, political connections to, for instance, member country representatives in the World Bank, are not influential for the "traditional recruitment machine" in the World Bank. The subsequent comments describe prevalent views among the respondents when assessing the impact of diversity considerations and political connections on the recruitment process:

*"There are no quotas. But the objective is to enhance "Nationalities of Concern" and increase the diversity score in general. That's why a special task force was created in the World Bank to address*

*this important aspect of diversification.”*

*“We try to keep track on the one side of donor countries, where we know that there is no balance between their contributions and representation, even though there is no direct connection between contribution and representation. We have no quota. But we know that it would be nice to have a more balanced representation. We also keep a strong consideration of the countries with no voice, meaning the developing countries and that they should be also represented, well represented. We are referring especially to the Sub-Saharan countries and the Caribbean countries. We keep an eye and make sure that we explore the different labor markets.”*

*“It’s quality. This is very clear. We never sacrifice quality of recruitment for nationality or something else. We would never do that. If we do that we would do tremendous damage to the institution. If we have two equally qualified candidates, one from Nationalities of Concern and one from ordinary nationalities, we probably prefer to get the candidate from the Nationalities of Concern.”*

*“I did not have any political connections. I did not go through the Executive Director’s office. I just applied regular and got in. I do not think the political angle helps with the traditional recruitment machine in the World Bank actually. I think not here.”*

We also ask respondents about the **interviewing process**. Specifically, we ask whether interviews were conducted on the basis of a specific set of questions across all interviewees in a systematic fashion. In response, one interviewee claims that the World Bank does not have a set catalogue of generic questions. While the specific questions regarding background and technical expertise may vary by job and selection committee, what was considered as fairly consistent throughout, were questions addressing motivation and behavioral skills. With respect to motivation, respondents suggested that passion for development was a baseline, yet very important criterion for hiring a candidate. Behavioral skills were considered very important. Such skills include team work skills, communication skills, and negotiation skills, to name only a few.<sup>37</sup> The following statement by a Human Resource Officer who is frequently part of the interviewing process addresses the recurrence of three key themes: motivation, technical expertise, and behavioral qualities.

*“Number one, we don’t have generic questions to ask the candidates, but we do have general guidelines in terms of how the interview should be conducted. We encourage the interviewers to conform to that guideline. For instance, we always ask the panel to send out, number one, motivation types of questions: Why does the person want to work for the World Bank. And number two, there will always be a lot of time in the interview to discuss the technical aspect, the technical strength of the candidates to figure out whether the person is technically good enough to work for World Bank, to take the challenge. That’s very important. Then we always spend a lot of time to figure out whether the candidate is a culture fit, whether there is any behavior that says that the person can do teamwork, which is of fundamental importance to function here. [...] No matter how good you are technically. They always spend a good amount of time to find out how the candidate can work in a team, how he resolves conflict, how he works hard to get the job done, how he communicates with the clients. So behavioral aspects are very important in the process of interviewing.”*

Similarly, other respondents underscored the relevance of the three themes mentioned above for their own recruitment process, also. More specifically, one respondent said that questions assessing

<sup>37</sup> Refer to Section 4.4 where these skills are listed and discussed.

social and presentational skills dominated the interview, rather than questions assessing technical strengths. In this view, technical aspects were critical for becoming short-listed but were not central during the interview, as the following comment shows.

*"To be on the short-list it is the technical skills, I would say. In the interview, it is also very much the social skills and how you present yourself. I remember one colleague thought that they should not hire me, because my English was still kind of stump. [...] So you know, language, how you present, that is all important. They asked me a lot of personal questions. They really did not ask me a lot of technical questions at the interview. Now I do not know if that has changed over time. But it was more about: "How would you approach that?" or "What are your strengths?" A lot of personal they wanted to know from me."*

An additional assessment tool for recruitment is **written tests** during the interviewing period. Unlike the interview, tests are not indispensable to the recruitment process. However, they appear to be administered based on demand. With respect to mid-career hires, for instance, only one respondent in the sample mentions a written test held parallel to the interviews. For respondents who were hired as Young Professionals, a motivational essay is required at the early application stage. Hence, there appears to be no standard policy that requires written tests. According to the mid-career hire, written tests were judged as "complementary" and allow for a further evaluation of the candidates' linguistic skills and/or substantive knowledge, as the following comment underlines:

*"Well they did have a written test. Actually they had two tests. One was on finance and another test to gauge the writing skills.[...] Actually the tests are seen as complementary to the performance of the candidate in the interview."*

Summarizing, the respondents' evaluations of recruitment procedures at the World Bank, we conclude that success factors for recruitment derive from qualifications and skills in four different areas. These are motivation, technical skills, education, and behavioral skills.

#### 4.6 Germans at the World Bank

This section focuses on Germans at the World Bank. (1) It examines our interviewees' attitudes about Germans at the World Bank with respect to their skills and qualifications. (2) It offers a separate analysis of German staff's perceptions of their university education in Germany, as indicated in section 4.2. Such a separate analysis is useful for several reasons. First, we are able to specifically address weaknesses of the German education system that could potentially hinder a professional career at international organizations, in general, and the World Bank, in particular. Respondents make specific suggestions with respect to improving the German education system, with the objective of making it more useful for a career with the World Bank. Their recommendations will be addressed in section 4.8, where we assess all of our interviewees' recommendations for curriculum development. Second, a focus on the German education system allows us to draw initial inferences about the hypothesized relationship between German education and low levels of German representation at the World Bank. Third, we present evidence that suggests other factors that respondents associate with low levels of German representation at the World Bank.

We are aware that our attempt to analyze our respondents' perceptions of their German colleagues should not lead to a generalization of all German nationals at the World Bank, as experiences vary by type and frequency and thus ultimately provide too much variation for us to draw valid inferences. However, we seek to detect possible patterns among respondents' answers and present them as "subjective" evaluations, rather than "objective" ones. We assume that respondents' evaluations are informed by previous work experience with Germans at the World Bank. Moreover, we think such "subjective" assessments allow us to strengthen our insights into what qualities figure prominently in respondents' eyes or, from another angle, whether the lack of certain skills has negative implications on one's job performance at the World Bank.

When asked about their view of German colleagues at the World Bank, the majority considers them well qualified, overall, and they are most frequently described as "very competent", "knowledgeable" and as having a "strong technical background." According to many respondents, Germans were particularly appreciated for their work in certain technical areas. That is, they are viewed as very qualified in technical fields such as, for instance, engineering, agriculture, infrastructure and the environment. At the World Bank, there appears to be a general recognition of German expertise in these areas. One respondent even suggests that the World Bank proactively seeks out Germans for specialist positions in certain technical areas. Simultaneously, Germans are considered less competent in other technical areas of the World Bank's operations. These include human development areas such as education, health, and social protection. To the area of human development, Germans bring mostly implementation experience, which does not factor prominently in the World Bank's development approach. The lack of technical skills in areas related to human development is described as disadvantageous by one respondent. It should not be surprising, therefore, that figures represent this bias within the World Bank. That is, fewer Germans work in human development as opposed to areas commonly associated with German expertise. The subsequent comments exemplify the technical strength of Germans in certain areas (e.g. engineering), as opposed to other fields (e.g., human development):

*"Where the World Bank is looking for Germans is certain technical areas, like infrastructure, transportation, urban development. Those are areas where Germans apparently are good. So engineering fields in a way. I think agriculture is also one of them."*

*"They are known for technical skills in certain areas [...] agriculture, environmental stuff, certain sections of engineering, I think, I forget, water and power engineers, I think we have quite a few. [...] But I mean those areas are areas that Germans are known for, engineering, agriculture, less human development skills, meaning, education, health, and social protection and probably less economics, and stuff like that."*

*"And my problem with the Germans that I have hired has been, maybe it is just because it is human development, but we get more practitioner types who have gone out and worked in poor countries or have worked at KFW or something, where they implement programs and then they expect that they'll come to the World Bank and it is the same. But in the World Bank, we are a bank essentially, so the analytical skills are highly prized and the practitioner skills are not as highly prized. Because we do not actually implement things, we finance to implement things. [...] If I had to characterize any negatives of the German people I have hired and worked with, they tend to come from the implementation side rather than the analytical side."*

Aside from a largely positive evaluation of their German colleagues' technical skills, respondents think highly of Germans with respect to their organizational and language skills. In terms of behavioral skills, respondents described them as results-oriented, pragmatic and straightforward. Such skills are viewed as strong assets by many respondents. Results-orientation matters in particular, as it permeates the World Bank's development approach; yet cannot be taken for granted across staff, as one respondent adds. Pragmatism is deemed important in the context of finding practicable solutions and "getting things done," be it within the Bank or in cooperation with clients. Finally, one respondent describes German counterparts as "very respectful of other cultures," which is a key asset for working in a multi-cultural environment.

A perusal of the respondents' answers suggests that Germans are, overall, well-appreciated in the World Bank, both in terms of professional skills and behavioral skills, albeit with some exceptions. What is noteworthy here is that Germans in the World Bank very often have an international background or, even more specifically, a degree from an Anglo-Saxon university. Among eight German interviewees, five hold at least a Master's degree from an Anglo-Saxon institution, either from U.S. or British universities. Germans at the World Bank might thus not reflect the "typical" background of German professionals. Even more directly some German respondents would agree that an Anglo-Saxon education increases their level of qualification, as the following comment suggests:

*"My general presumption would be that they [Germans] are qualified. My experience is that people tend to be more qualified if they, like myself, combine a certain level of education at a university outside of Germany. [...] They usually have a M.A. or Ph.D. from a U.S. university."*

*"I think the Germans who sort of make it here generally have some kind of international educational background often times, or maybe they grew up abroad."*

As mentioned previously, German respondents consistently, with the exception of one, rated their German education as flawed and of little use for their current job. Subsequently, we address their criticisms. What is noteworthy here is that criticisms are backed by experiences they gained through their Anglo-Saxon graduate education, which adds a comparative component to their evaluations.

When asked to identify weaknesses in their education, respondents referred to the theoretical focus of the German education system as being "too much" and of little use to their current work. For one, the heavy emphasis on "reading books" inhibited the acquisition of important skills for a job at the World Bank; these include, for instance, communication skills exemplified in debating and public speaking skills, as well as strategic thinking skills, which require a more applied approach to teaching. Other skills that were lacking in the respondents' education were analytical and quantitative skills. Here references are frequently made to Anglo-Saxon educational experiences as "best practice" examples.

Others shared a concern related to the relevance of the materials covered at university. As some respondents suggest, the selection of topics simply did not reflect what "really matters to our daily lives." In terms of breadth, one respondent suggests that German curricula are "too narrow" and "insufficiently integrated across multidisciplinary boundaries" to allow for the type of generalist

background, in addition to a specialized one, that is of high value for working at the World Bank. Again, as “best practice examples”, respondents refer to their education outside of Germany. The following comments exemplify some of the respondents’ concerns:

*"Honestly, I think the German system is very much reading books. It is not very relevant to what we are doing here, I think. I never studied here, but I noticed with my colleagues that they have many more analytical skills, and they are also much more into debating different concepts. [...] I think that is really something that is missing."*

*"The German approach is very much one where you have to learn everything, the theories, mathematics. [...] Today a lot of German economics at the university level is really not very relevant and regarded as opposed to having a practical and pragmatic approach. While economics in Britain is taught in a way where you are asked to think, and to question the system, and to analyze yourself. You learn to assess whether a system is really realistic and what you can use it for. What we could do to make it better. It gives you more courage to question things." It's a more pragmatic approach. [...] Universities [in Germany] are so far and often remote from what really matters to our daily lives."*

*"One of the things that happens in Germany's education, going back to the earlier topic, is, it is too narrow, it is too much in silo terms, insufficiently integrated across multidisciplinary boundaries. This is one of the things that happens much more in Anglo-Saxon education in general than in Germany."*

Concerning the selection of topics and teaching environment, respondents claim, in a broad sense, that the German education system lacks an international outlook. In terms of the materials covered, the German curriculum is described as very specific to the German market and is often remote to what was happening on the international agenda during one interviewee’s education. Hence, such lack of exposure to internationally-oriented topics either encouraged respondents to pursue a graduate degree at an Anglo-Saxon institution or demanded a lot self-initiative to acquire knowledge of topics of interest, as one respondent suggests, whose education took place in Germany only. When addressing specifically valuable topics for a career in international organizations, one respondent claims that substantive knowledge on international organizations was lacking in German education, while it appears to figure prominently in the curriculum of some U.S. graduate programs. The following comments exemplify the points mentioned above:

*"What matters is the integration of the stuff, of the curriculum with what is on the international agenda. The important things in economics are, when I studied, were defined by what is happening in the U.S. labor market primarily, the academic labor market in America, the UK, and a few other countries, but Germany is not among them."*

*"At German universities, you do not even know what kind of organizations exists. Sometimes you learn about United Nations, but that is it. There [at a U.S. university] I learned about what the World Bank is and what the World Bank does and the IMF and something that was useful."*

In addition, several respondents took issue with the teaching profession at German universities. While, in more general terms, the education system was described as “introverted” or “top-down” in its approach to teaching the student body, another describes the quality of teaching as “second and third rate,” compared to international standards. The fact that German faculty teaches and



publishes largely in German exacerbates the disconnect of German universities for mainly English-driven market trends, as one respondent suggests.

*"I think in Germany you have one professor and he just teaches what he believes in. And that is very much about it. It is very much top down. [...] I also believe that the university system really needs to change in Germany and needs to open up. You know, it is all so surprising to me, how introverted they [German universities] are. They have no clue what we are doing here. So the university should also try to link up with international organizations, so that they know what is required."*

*"In essence, the stuff that I got in Germany was useless. I am sure that you have heard that now many times. It is both the selection of topics meaning the matrix choices in the curriculum, but it is also purely the quality of the teaching and the quality of, it is quite frankly by international standards second and third rate. It is just not first rate."*

*"Also I think that I only gained the elements that I needed through a lot of self-initiative. So I think if I had studied, you know Germany gives you a lot of freedom in terms of education and many students, particularly when it comes to economics, actually use it to choose the simplest way possible and if they do so they might have good grades, but they face deficits in their education itself and I see that very often. Let us put it in other words, a German education in economics allows you to finish a degree in economics and at the end of the day not even be an economist."*

Aside from concerns with curriculum or teaching aspects of the German education system, respondents raise three more issues that they see as directly affecting recent graduates' chances for either getting into or pursuing a successful career at the World Bank: One respondent states that the length of the German education translates into a comparative disadvantage for Germans vis-à-vis, for instance, graduates from Anglo-Saxon universities. Germans are typically "older" and bring less work experience to the job than others. Moreover, the German education tradition does not instill competitive behavior in its students. Two Germans view such a behavioral disposition as positive, however, and even critical for succeeding in competitive environments in general and international organizations in particular. Finally, respondents address the advantage associated with networking among universities as well as entertaining and fostering direct ties to the World Bank. Here, some U.S. and British schools are mentioned in an exemplary fashion, which have strong network ties and research cooperation with the World Bank in particular. Such networking appears to be missing from German universities, as respondents suggest. The subsequent comments exemplify Germans' concerns:

*"Definitely older, once they [German graduates] are done. They arrive and have less work experience, which is a downside and that has really nothing to do with the quality of the people or anything, but it is disadvantage, because at age 33 other people will have had ten years of work experience, whereas you have six and that matters because your CV is shorter."*

*"The education system in Germany is not oriented to provide us with a sense of competitive behavior. Competition is totally lacking in all universities and I would say if you want to succeed in IO, particularly if you go to the IMF or the World Bank or even the United Nations, I think you have to be very competitive in your behavior. I mean that in an American positive sense."*

*"I do not see it [networking between German universities and the World Bank] . If it really does [happen], it would be an exception. I do not know why that is. If it is an issue on the university side, or..."*

Summarizing the myriad of shared concerns among German respondents with respect to their education, we conclude that in general respondents are dissatisfied with their German education. Such concerns lead five respondents to acquire relevant skills through additional education abroad. The three Germans in the sample who did not pursue their graduate education abroad stress the need for “a lot of self-initiative” to get skills necessary for a job at the World Bank. Based on such evidence, we suggest that overall, the German education system appears ill-suited to prepare its students for a career in international organizations.

Whether such deficits directly affect levels of representation at the World Bank is a question that we lack evidence to answer. We did not directly ask respondents to address this particular relationship. However, some mention several social and political factors that account for low levels of representation among Germans at the World Bank in particular and at international organizations in general. Although this study is not designed to examine factors leading to German underrepresentation at the World Bank, we deem it interesting to briefly examine our respondents’ views. Since not all German interviewees address this issue, the following hypotheses are not necessarily representative of the sample or German views in general. However, they offer interesting insights into what German World Bank higher level staff think when addressing the widely perceived problem of Germans in international organizations.

- *Under representation originates in Germany’s societal structure:* According to this view, the “monetary, financial and social incentives” inherent in German society are sufficiently strong to make an international career less desirable. Further, lack of (attractive) re-entry opportunities infuse fear among potential and well-qualified candidates to consider employment at international organization abroad:

*“It simply has to do with the way the German society is organized and all the other monetary, financial and social incentives that Germans have to stay in Germany that is a long-term issue that really has to do with German society structure and it is similar to Japan and it will not change any-time soon. It is much more ingrained in the fabric of German society.”*

*“Those people we are trying to target who have experience in development, let us say people from Kreditanstalt, BMZ. There are a lot of them who are not interested in working for the World Bank. They think the World Bank is arrogant or abroad and they don’t want to go abroad. They are afraid of when they come back, what is going to happen? Are they going to find a job again in Germany? I have seen that kind of behavior.”*

- *In spite of the high volume of German applications, lack of knowledge about the World Bank affects levels of representation:* According to this view, Germans appear to know very little about the business of the World Bank as a development institution. While the number of applications submitted may be high, they largely lack necessary qualifications, as the following comment suggests.

*“I can talk about, why Germans are not being hired, which is a different story. [...] It starts with, that people have no clue what the World Bank is. It is actually quite scary the kind of questions I*

*sometime get. So people are not familiar with the business of the Bank. We have commercial bankers applying, sort of Raiffeisenbank managers who think they can work at the World Bank, and have not understood, that it is a development agency. We did an event in Berlin almost two years ago. We had over 500 applications; 200 applications did not meet the minimum criteria of having international experience, speaking English, or having a completed a Master's program."*

- *A negative view of international organizations pervades the media and has a negative impact on representation:* According to this view, public opinion leaders tend to portray international institutions in a negative light and thus might dampen general interest in working for an international organization. What is needed are means that enable the formation of a complementary view that is more in sync with the work and output of the institutions, as the following comments show:

*"I think a big problem for Germans is, that, and that has to do with the World Bank as an organization, it is not the qualification of the Germans, even if it might be good, it does not have the reputation that is needed."*

*"A lot of public opinion, meaning mass media, public opinion leaders, like the Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ, those types of papers, magazines, not Spiegel and not Stern, we are talking about opinion leaders, also in TV and the media. The way that international institutions are portrayed in these media is negative. If you get negative public opinion about international institutions -day in day out- you are not likely to develop a great interest in them. [...] The real issue is providing vehicles and events and providing opportunities for public opinion to get a different view, [...] a complementary view. It provides the other side to the spectrum, which complements people from these institutions who come. It is obvious that people coming from the institutions are always going to be seen as blowing their horn and singing their song and selling the institution. It is going to be biased. It is going to be much more honest and much more welcome and well received if it comes from German sources rather from the institutions themselves. So public opinion is part of the deal as well."*

- *The limited ability of German governmental representatives to identify suitable candidates for managerial posts has a dampening impact on representation.* This view suggests that, the German government offers little help in the targeted candidate searches for the World Bank and is able to generate fewer potential candidates than other countries, such as France, as the following comment suggests:

*"On the managerial level, what we see is that Germany is unable to identify candidates for posts: [...] France sends us, within two or three weeks, 15 CVs from sort of the top people in the country. [...] And from Germany we got two applications. If Germany was more practical, if those institutions were in charge of this, and that is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I guess the BMZ. [...] If those people could lead us quicker to potential candidates whom you can actually take serious, that would help a lot. Some countries are really active in that, and others are not."*

A perusal of the four hypotheses suggests that there appear to be a number of factors that influence levels of German representation in the World Bank and in international organizations, in general. The weaknesses attributed to the German education system may factor in as well, though evidence remains rather weak.

## 4.7 Recommendations for Future Applicants

After assessing our respondents' views on necessary skills and qualifications at the World Bank in section 4.4, we now examine how students can prepare themselves for higher level staff careers within the institution. We ask our respondents about their specific recommendations for students interested in pursuing a career at the World Bank. First, we present recommendations that apply to students' education. Second, we discuss suggestions concerning professional experience. Third, we address other qualifications or aspects pertinent to increase one's job-preparedness.

### 4.7.1 Education

Most broadly speaking, all respondents recommend students to pursue a high quality education, either on the Masters' or Ph.D. level. Aside from fulfilling formal educational criteria for jobs at the World Bank, respondents associate a high quality graduate education with the opportunity to develop strong academic credentials, excel academically, and stay au courant with cutting-edge research. In terms of knowledge, some respondents recommend that students acquire broad as well as specific knowledge. That is, students may want to study one topic "in-depth" to acquire technical expertise and, simultaneously, increase their generalist knowledge to be able to take on different professions and work across different geographical areas. While most respondents propose that students should study what they are most interested in, they strongly recommend that students study with a goal in mind, preferably with a focus on topics related to the World Bank's business. Particular emphasis is placed on solid grounding in economics. Learning languages cannot be over-emphasized. All respondents recommended to learn languages throughout one's education, or possibly even after. As the World Bank's unifying language, English should be "up to working speed", especially in writing. Besides, they recommend that students master at least one other language, preferably more. Many respondents refer to French and Spanish as highly recommendable.

*"The first thing would be to decide what you want to do for the IO. Because let us say that you are working for the UN, and UN has the help, the peacekeeping, you know there are so many areas, so there has to be a focus. One has to decide which area one likes to be in. Once the decision is made, get a good education in that area. And the best of the best education for an IO, because for an IO you need to be at the cutting edge."*

*"I would probably advise this person to focus on specific issues to build up an expertise. Or let us say if this person studies economics then she should within her economic curricula choose one or two topics, which she is really interested and try to pursue it more consistently and not just be all over the place. You know, it is good to have broad knowledge, but I think deep knowledge is as important and at the end of the day always helpful."*

*"To the World Bank? Well, you should study economics. If you end up being an economist, because they have people here that are education specialists or others. You need to have an education in economics. With some specialization in macroeconomics, international macroeconomics, and development fields."*

*"It [the field of study] needs to be highly relevant. So you need to make sure, in the way you study, and in the way you create your first professional experiences, that it is international, that it is development-related, that you are very strong in academics. That is what you have in the beginning. I mean quite frankly, you hopefully studied abroad, at some university with a strong reputation."*

*"Definitely learn another language. Make sure that your English is up to working speed. Everything is done in English. Even some units work in the French language. And you have to be fluent in French and English. But English is just the language for all international organizations."*

In terms of skills, respondents recommend students to ensure the acquisition of skills that can be applied afterwards; for instance, writing skills, communication skills, presentation skills, only to name a few. Particular emphasis was placed on analytical skills. Such a skill set factors prominently in day-to-day World Bank business. To get international exposure and a feel for other cultures early on, many respondents recommend studies abroad, either in the form of an exchange program or an entire graduate education. Some specifically suggested an education at reputable institutions in the United States or the United Kingdom. The pursuit of extra-curricular activities was recommended also, as it allows students to sharpen their skills as well as increase their knowledge on areas outside of university. Further, many respondents recommended to seek out professionals early, preferably during one's education; and develop mentor-student relationships. Of particular value are contacts with professors who advance agendas and/or projects that students are interested in pursuing themselves. Beyond the benefits of contacts, professors and/or professionals can expand peoples' minds:

*"If you come just from your own country, ever lived in your own country, never lived abroad, never looked across your own border, it just sends the wrong signals and so people who have studied abroad or lived abroad are just a more natural fit and people who recruit for the World Bank know this and they are also able to articulate their experiences in a different way from people who lived the entire time in Germany."*

*"The other things which are important especially when it comes to the American system is to do extra-curricular activities. Americans tend to put those on their CVs a lot. And I think a lot of skills can be learned in those, be it like organizing a conference or leading some group to do something."*

*"How can they prepare for a job? Number one, search out your professor's background and find professors who have worked for the World Bank, either as a staff member or a consultant. And do not be afraid to ask. Number two, failing that; find a professor who actually does things that are practical in nature, but highly analytical. In other words, there is a lot to be said during your schooling period to seek out professors who claim to be the type of person that you want to become. Rather than taking classes, find that person. The greatest thing that happened to me is that my major professor for my Ph.D. was somebody just like that. He actually worked for the World Bank. He went out and did surveys. He went and did things. I cannot overemphasize the importance or starting when you are in your Ph.D. or Master's program. In your Master's program you do not get as close relationships with professors. But definitely in your Ph.D. program carefully pick one or two professors who actually do what you want to do."*

#### **4.7.2 Work Experience**

In addition to recommendations with respect to students' education, all respondents mention the importance of gaining work experience, preferably in an international context. They propose several avenues by which students or recent graduates can get international and/or practical experience: Most often recommended were internships, followed by volunteer work, field research, and short-term consulting opportunities - all of which should preferably be based in an international context. For some, such work exposure demonstrates interest in international affairs in general. For others, internships lend themselves to acquiring initial professional skills that are pertinent to ad-

vancing professionally. More specifically even, the majority of respondents recommended that such international experience should be in a development context. Internships and volunteer work for development agencies, in particular, were recommended as particularly valuable. Others state that field research in developing countries may suffice. What is key here is the early exposure to what is happening on the ground in developing countries increases awareness of living conditions in other countries. Such experience is particularly useful when dealing with clients and designing country assistance projects at the World Bank. International development experience is recommended further because initial hands-on experience in a development context may help focus students' career plans. Besides their benefit for acquiring professional skills and increasing one's knowledge of development issues, respondents recommend internships for their networking value. While having contacts may not necessarily lead to employment once the internship period is over, internships provide the opportunity to get to know staff within the organization as well as to establish a reputation for oneself. Even more generally, respondents recommend that professional networks be established early, and not necessarily in an internship context.

*"The core thing would be to get an internship in that institution or related institutions, because that helps a lot so you get a perspective, not only of the work that you are going to do in the future, but also in the working of the organization, how an IO works."*

*"One definitely should do the internships abroad. With international experience also comes the sensitivity towards multicultural experiences and communication skills in general, not just different languages, but overall I think it is important."*

*"So getting the overall experience, exposure to working in developing countries, to be able to demonstrate that they [students] actually have initiative and they can do things on their own, that they have the ambition. It is tough to demonstrate that by just being a student. So that would require some opportunities to work."*

*"And try to get an internship with an international organization. Even if maybe the work might not be very interesting. But you get a lot of contacts. And that will help you later when you actually look for a job."*

#### **4.7.3 Application and Interview**

Further, several respondents share their recommendations with respect to the application and recruitment process. In order to be considered for a position, candidates need to pass the first hurdle; the prescreening by Human Resource Officers. Due to the high volume of applications per job, respondents suggested that CV design is especially important. To that effect, they recommend that people should take time to design their CVs. What helps is to gear the CV specifically to the terms of reference for the respective jobs and insert keywords that Human Resource Officers are looking for – so that your CV "stands out." The World Bank actually provides assistance for preparing an effective CV, as one respondent points out. Interested candidates should take advantage of such support, as it only increases their chances to make it past the first hurdle of being considered, and possibly, get onto the long-list.

*"When you apply you have to apply in a way that your CV stands out with all the necessary characteristics that are required for the job, because the person who is clustering your CV looks for the keywords."*

*"The perfect candidate must have the perfect CV - very clearly written, so that I can read it easily and get the information out."*

*"We help interested people to write their CVs. We do mock interviews with them to prepare them well for questions that the World Bank may ask in interview panels. If candidates are not successful we give them feedback about why they were not successful and what they can do to enhance their opportunities and chances. It could be lack of experience and exposure in the development world. It could be that they don't have sufficient exposure to any particular aspect of the job like policy work or analytical work. And we tell them. And if it is behavior, we also speak of behavioral weaknesses."*

With respect to the interviewing that concerns that final group of candidates, respondents recommended that candidates prepare extensively. The organization should be studied in-depth as well as topics relevant to the World Bank's operations. Further, motivation and passion for development are critical and should be demonstrated effectively, using examples from previous exposure to developmental issues, be they through extra-curricular activities, volunteer work or actual work experience. Finally, they advise students to work on their presentational and communication skills to acquire their qualification, skills, and motivation across effectively.

*"Prepare, prepare and prepare for the interview, just prepare. It is very important to be prepared. You have to study the organization, you have to study the political and the economic situation, the implications, any trends, anything and everything that can provide you with information and can equip you with information."*

*"It is important how the person presents him or herself to the panel. That means to know how to answer, how to bring in past experience, personal skills, communication skills and whether he is a team player with a good educational background. Actually, when I say good I mean strong, strong educational background. Experience can vary; But I think the main thing is how the interview goes, that the CV is written well and the education."*

#### **4.8 Recommendations for Curriculum Development**

An important objective of the PROFIO project is to design an "ideal" curriculum that contains all educational elements necessary to prepare its students for careers at international organizations. In section 4.2 we already examined educational elements that respondents thought of as useful, and which they acquired at university. In this section, we ask respondents to advise us on curriculum design. That is, we ask them to identify elements that curricula should address to facilitate the acquisition and strengthening of skills relevant to a job at the World Bank.

Prior to addressing specific educational elements that bode well for increasing one's job-preparedness at the World Bank, many respondents appeal to an international education environment as an important base-line condition for designing a sensible curriculum. To many, an international outlook of the program as a whole is key for fostering many of the skills and qualifications that are useful for work on the international level. Several respondents, for instance, suggested that programs should be open to a diverse and international student body, which sets the context for helping students develop a cross-cultural understanding of people and different perspectives. Essentially, such exposure will only help students adjust to the international environment of international organizations, if they choose to pursue this particular career path, as several respondents

suggest. Further, some respondents recommended that English be the language of instruction. English not only serves as a unifying linguistic tool for communication, but it also serves as a foundation to excel professionally in environments and areas where English is lingua franca, such as, for instance, in the World Bank and the field of economics, in general. The following comment summarizes the issues mentioned above:

*"The university can offer a curriculum that's based in English and have an international diversified student body. Having an international student body makes it easier. It creates an environment that you encounter in IOs."*

Aside from factors that set the context for learning, respondents also offer several recommendations with respect to the structure as well as the content of classes offered. Concerning structural aspects, the majority of respondents recommend a multi-disciplinary framework that allows students to work across thematic boundaries and helps them develop an early understanding of different concepts, for instance. Through a multi-disciplinary program students can increase the breadth of their knowledge. Breadth of knowledge is important to World Bank staff who operate in a matrix environment. Their daily project work involves many experts from related and/or different disciplines, with whom they collaborate on developmental issues. Such collaborative, cross-disciplinary work requires World Bank employees to work effectively across fields and regions. Further, some respondents recommend that curricula be fluid and comprehensive in nature by allowing students to make more specialized topic choices according to their interests, while simultaneously taking core classes that are focused on the delivery of broader knowledge and/or sets of practical skills. Further, small classes, rather than mass lectures, were suggested by several respondents to increase the knowledge cumulation, but most importantly to sharpen students' communication skills, such as, for instance debating skills, presentation skills, and learning how to make arguments in class.

*"The other thing that I see is that the curriculum should be fluid, but within a framework. It should be fluent enough for students to make choices or selections that would prepare them for a career of their choice. For instance, if somebody wants to be a public sector management specialist, then they should have the core curriculum and the additional curriculum. Opposed to somebody who wants to be a transport specialist, they also need to have a core and an additional curriculum."*

*"My overall feeling is, you want your education to be broad in general. In economics it should be solid. A Ph.D. in Economics is as good of a training as you can get. And get the more sort of multi-disciplinary studies you know, take optional courses that are available."*

*"I think it would be worth seeing how Oxford or Cambridge do it. It is a totally different system, where you work much more one-on-one, where you have debates about things, where it is outspoken, where it is not about handing in homework. [...] So, I think the mass university does not really help, I think."*

Once structural recommendations were addressed, respondents address the substantive part of the curriculum; that is, which topics should be covered. Related to a program's international outlook is the coverage of topics that are happening in the world. Beyond staying au courant in terms of knowledge, the study of the main issues of the day has immediate relevance to students' lives. A



few respondents recommend engaging more in cross-comparative studies to increase students' knowledge on what is going on both developed and developing countries. To that end, respondents also recommend the integration of topics that are relevant to development in general, and address demand-based development approaches, in particular. The World Bank's approach to development is demand-based rather than supply-based, and students should be exposed to these differences, as one respondent suggests. As indicated earlier in section 4.2.2, economic knowledge appears to be a *sine qua non* for professionals at the World Bank. To that end, the majority of the respondents recommend students to study economics during their education. Similarly, they suggest that curricula should integrate economics as a prominent field. Finally, substantive courses on international organizations are also recommended. Early knowledge on the variety of international organizations including their different mandates, functional and organizational structures and approaches to development, for instance, is only beneficial, as it helps broadens students' horizon concerning the various types of international organizations as well as shape their career choices.

*"Secondly I think in terms of the topics that people look at, there should be a lot more cross-country comparative stuff and looking at it as far as economics is concerned because this is what I can speak to, is the economic issues of other developed countries, other developed countries, be it the US, the UK, the European Union, but also developing countries."*

*"Teach economics. [...] It is certainly useful if you know something about economics, which I think at the end of the day is more relevant to many jobs in the world of IOs. What exactly this can be? The tasks can be macroeconomics or public finance or whatever, many things can apply. But you have more options when you study economics than anything else."*

*"Offer seminars about what is the work that people do there [at international organizations]. Invite professors! I am going, for instance, to Portugal and I am going to talk about my experience at the World Bank. I am going to talk about the entry points for this kind of organization, what the kind of work is that we do here. Because I found that people do not really know what we do here. So then people would get an interest, or at least know what those organizations are about, what they do. Because people see the papers, they see the loans, but there is so much more. And I think that is important."*

Aside from extensive knowledge gathering, what matters to the majority of respondents is a curriculum that fosters the development of skills as well. In other words, curricula should be well-balanced between theory, reality and application. According to them, such a balance could be achieved by exposing students to case study and situational project work. Through project work, in particular, students can apply what they learn immediately. Besides analytical and problem-solving skills, they acquire soft skills, such as, for instance, team and management skills, as well as a "can-do"- attitude. Aside from project work, students should be encouraged to participate in research projects and publish. When asked about the type of hard skills that respondents recommend for curricula to stress include analytical skills and quantitative skills as both are in high demand when working for the World Bank. Another suggests that a means to stress practicality in curricula is to bring in professionals to teach courses. For instance, it reflects on past experiences with professionals in the classroom and underscores the usefulness of learning from practitioners who apply their hard skills outside of academe. Such exposure can be a "mind-opener" as one respondent suggests. It also helps students shape their career paths. For instance, several respondents recommend that curricula should integrate professionals when teaching students about international

organizations. Regular brown-bag lunches and speakers-series are also suggested by some as further avenues by which professionals could contribute to students' developments. The following comments address the recommendations of respondents with respect to a balanced curriculum:

*"The curriculum should be very case-study based, because your students need to relate to real situations. Concepts, formulas, models, yes, but supported by more case studies than anything else."*

*"I think the balance that was maintained there [respondent's graduate experience] was substantially due to the ability of the university to offer course work that reflected a number of different countries involved, focusing on East Asia or South Asia or Latin America. Much exposure was given to the whole student body on that cause, which is quite large, to a number of initiatives, to a number of events, activities; experiences, if you will, across the globe. And there was ample time for seminar and review. It was not just the concentration on university requirements, but the extension on seminar and review and the ability to read were very much in the British tradition of reading around a topic and then reviewing these regions."*

*"What I would do is seminars with IO staff if possible, and exchange, especially with those who worked all around and in the field."*

While project work and the integration of professionals are important ways for students to connect with the real world, internships are suggested by many respondents as a crucial component of a student's career. While internships often depend on self-initiative, respondents recommend that universities integrate internships, preferably on an international level, into their curricula. Through internships, students can acquire behavioral skills and hands-on experience that curricula cannot account for entirely, but are necessary to succeed, e.g., in the World Bank. If internships are not integral components of curricula, then universities should at least support their students in getting the necessary contacts, even if it be simply information for entry points, as some respondents suggest:

*"I think these universities have a great program where they have integrated the practical experience along the classroom experience. So students spend some time in the classroom and a significant amount of time outside the classroom, getting something like an internship, but it is kind of structured differently. They come back with the experience, the practical experience, bring it back to the classroom and then you know have like a debate or common discussion about it and then evaluate the experience."*

*"I think it is incredibly important to have behavioral skills. But I think that is the kind of thing that totally requires training on the job. So if you can find internship options for your students that help develop those skills, that would be useful, rather than doing it in a classroom setting."*

*"I think they should help with the internships. I think they should have lively contact with international organizations, so that they can push their people over and get them internships. And that is certainly one of the best ways."*

*"Well, to start with, it would be good to give information to the student. When I was at university, I read books and papers by IMF people and the World Bank. And that was it. I did not even know the programs. I did not even know how to get into these institutions. For me it was something that was not even something to think about. Okay, now there is the internet and people just go and see job offers. But I think it is important to give information to the people. Tell them what the entry points are. How can you get into these programs? Information. I think that is something the universities could do."*

Some respondents also suggest that international exchange programs can serve as an important vehicle to help student acquire important international experience. Hence, universities should either include a study abroad module in the curriculum or widely promote extant exchange programs with other universities. Aside from providing students with the opportunity to study abroad, exchange programs may also serve as a means to connect universities and establish international university networking. Such networking among universities could increase students' exposure to cross-cultural dynamics as well as research. Importantly, exchange opportunities that allow students to liaise with highly reputable Anglo-Saxon academic institutions and scholarship will be conducive to their professional career. What matters here in particular is the opportunity to tap into existing networks and established career services that have a strong placement record. To most respondents, networking appears to be critical for a student's professional advancement. Besides networking with other universities, respondents directly speak to a link between universities and international organizations; typically, referring to U.S. Ivy League and reputable British schools as exemplary. They therefore recommend that curricula should incorporate a networking component that would benefit its students. For instance, many respondents suggested that universities invite representatives of international organizations to speak to and engage with the students. Or they advise faculty and university career services to actively promote awareness of job opportunities at international organizations:

*"It is important to weave in the global cultures into the curriculum through exchange programs. Many students that study in isolated cultures fail when they come into international organizations."*

*"It is also the emphasis within the curriculum that should encourage people to go on these traineeships and this whole issue of partnerships between universities, with private, public, NGOs, industries. We have for example here, when you study in the states or in the UK, you have a career office there. They are there to help you to get work, even during your curriculum or when you have Christmas holidays or summer holidays."*

*"Great people help you network. Your professors help you make your first contacts, who could help you define your research programs, your colleagues, people you go through school with become interesting and independent careers of their own you plug into their network and if you foster the relationships at school you have them your whole life. The way that school promotes that is important. They shouldn't leave it to chance."*

Summarizing the respondents' recommendations for curriculum design, we find that strong emphasis is placed on the international outlook of the curriculum and the practical application of knowledge acquired throughout one's education. To ensure an international outlook, universities should (1) be open and appeal to international students, (2) introduce English as their primary language of instruction, and (3) cover topics that are of immediate relevance to what is happening in the respective international markets. To ensure preparedness for a job at the World Bank, universities should (4) expose their students to the field of economics. To ensure their students' skill development, universities should (5) encourage the students' application of their theoretical knowledge by integrating problem sets or situational projects into the curriculum; (6) encourage teamwork and communication among the students, and (7) invite professionals as speakers or instructors who have demonstrated a strong record of knowledge application. To further prepare their students for

an international career, universities should (8) integrate international exchange or internship programs into their programs, and (9) promote careers as well as provide contact assistance to students who are interested in gaining practical experience.

## **5 Conclusion**

An important objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the sets of skills and qualifications necessary for excelling professionally at the World Bank. Further, we presented insights into the recruitment process at the World Bank. Finally, we gathered recommendations of our World Bank interview partners with respect to curriculum development. Such advice by World Bank staff contributes meaningfully to PROFIO's main goal: We seek to design curricula that successfully prepare students to work at international organizations. Since little systematic research had been done on either of our queries, we employed qualitative research methods to tackle our research questions. Subsequently, we offer a brief summary of our findings.

The profile of the "perfect candidate" for a job at the World Bank includes, at a minimum, strong academic credentials with a Master's degree or a Ph.D. and work experience in a relevant field, preferably abroad. Besides, the candidate should bring the behavioral and professional competencies necessary to excel professionally in a competitive, multi-cultural setting. Most often mentioned were analytical skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, and client engagement competency. Others include leadership skills, writing skills, flexibility, and a competitive spirit. The specific repertoire of skills in demand may vary according to the jobs advertised. Further, interviewees underscored the importance of stressing such skill sets in one's application process; and particularly during the job interviews.

A breakdown of our interviewees' fields of study shows that Economics and development-related topics were most frequently pursued. Many respondents further stressed the value of multidisciplinary studies as they enable professionals to cover and master a range of relevant topics once confronted with them at the World Bank. Interviewees expressed particular satisfaction with their education at Anglo-Saxon universities. An analysis of German respondents only revealed their dissatisfaction with the German education system. More specifically, we were able to present a number of limitations that render German universities ill-suited to prepare their students for employment in international organizations in general and at the World Bank in particular.

Further, this study identifies skills and qualifications necessary for working at the World Bank. These are: strong academic credentials and technical knowledge, analytical skills, client engagement competency, communication skills, writing skills, teamwork skill, flexibility, consensus-building capacity, leadership skills, and initiative. Besides, behavioral attributes such as tolerance and empathy for other cultures was frequently mentioned.

Finally, this study presented several targeted recommendations as to how universities could contribute to preparing their students to succeed professionally at the World Bank. Apart from delivering top notch theoretical knowledge, universities should focus on acquiring an international outlook. Such an objective could be reached, for instance, through an international student body and English as the primary language of instruction. Further, the coverage of cutting-edge topics facilitates students' sense for what is happening in the world, while, simultaneously fostering their innovation potential. In addition, universities should encourage students to apply their knowledge in practical

contexts by exposing them to applied problem-solving. Students' sense for the applied side of knowledge could further be fostered through speakers' series that attract established professionals in the respective fields, or even more targeted: universities could offer courses taught by professionals. We find that the integration of internships may serve as an excellent vehicle to allow students to acquire initial practical experience, which will benefit them in their later job searches. Further, career services could facilitate the students' integration in the international work force.

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